MAY 2023

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MULTIHULL SPECIAL

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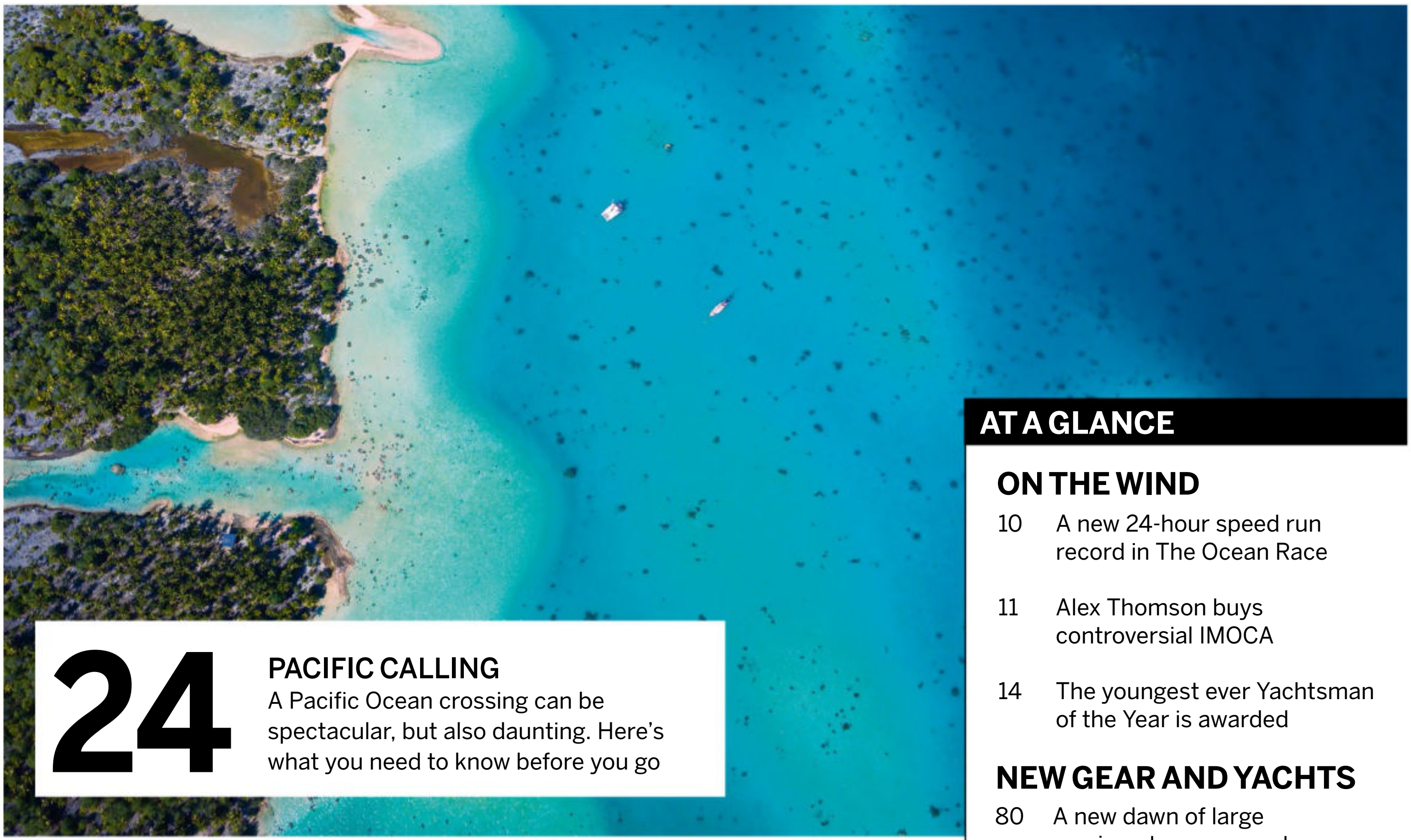

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The 47ft Elan E6 performance cruiser as tested on page 66. Photo by Barbar Studio

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Julien Champolion|polaRYSE/Holcim-PRB

Plenty to smile about: crew Abby Ehler and Sam Goodchild aboard *Holcim-PRB,* currently topping the Ocean Race leaderboard

INSIDE THE BUBBLE

With just four IMOCA 60s going around the world it would be easy to dismiss this year's Ocean Race, but you'd be missing a trick. The old saying goes you only need two boats sailing in the same direction to have a race. Well, this race has proved that you don't need a huge fleet to make an event that captures the imagination – you just need teams followers can care about.

Against the odds, The Ocean Race is providing just that, and much of it is down to the amazing content coming from the onboard reporters (OBRs). First, we're getting to see what IMOCA sailing in the deepest oceans of the world looks like – from both on the boat and a bird's eye view. Unsurprisingly, the solo Vendée Globe skippers are usually a bit busy to get the drone out, but the OBRs have shot amazing footage of the boats foiling in huge conditions (see page 6).

But more interesting yet is the glimpse into crew dynamics. With just four sailors on each boat, plus an OBR, living and working inside the IMOCA's confined cockpits, this is a more intimate portrayal of life in an offshore racing crew than ever before. There is nowhere to hide your emotions. The OBRs have captured the fury and frustration of the *11th Hour Racing* crew as they contended with serious breakages. And they've shown how *Team Malizia*'s morale has soared to match their boatspeed (if you haven't seen the team's drone flight videos, then do – their upbeat attitude is truly infectious). This is raw reality TV, ocean racing style.

Helen Fretter
Editor

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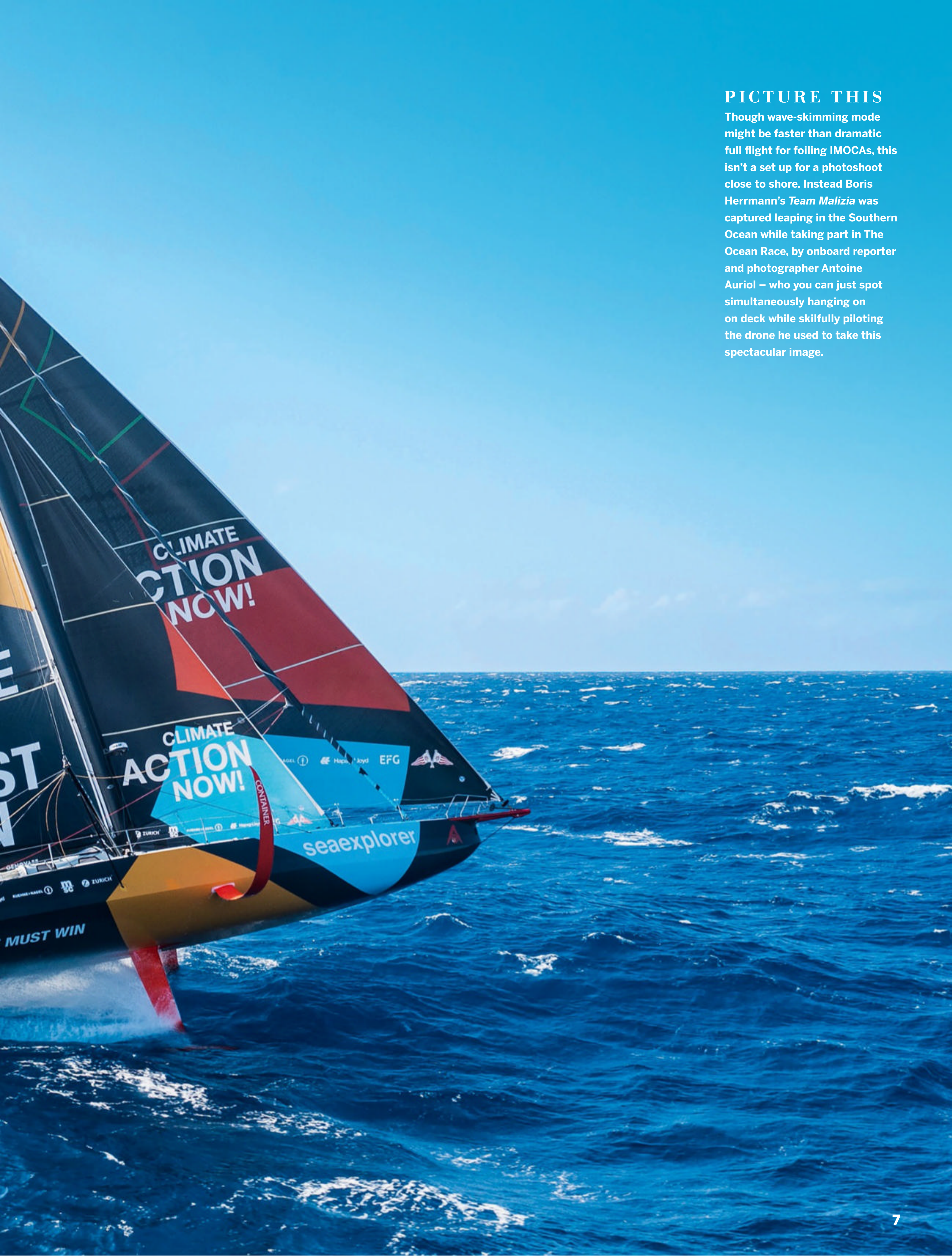
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PICTURE THIS

Though wave-skimming mode might be faster than dramatic full flight for foiling IMOCAs, this isn’t a set up for a photoshoot close to shore. Instead Boris Herrmann’s *Team Malizia* was captured leaping in the Southern Ocean while taking part in The Ocean Race, by onboard reporter and photographer Antoine Auriol – who you can just spot simultaneously hanging on on deck while skilfully piloting the drone he used to take this spectacular image.

PICTURE THIS

Pacific dreams: Oyster 565 *Infinity* moored off Monuriki Island, Fiji, during the Oyster World Rally. Thirty yachts took part in the 16-month, 27,000-mile circumnavigation in 2022/23. Their world tour comes to a close in Antigua this April, but the next World Rally is due to set off in January 2024, and Oyster is already taking registrations of interest for 2026.
Photo: Oyster Yachts

HOLCIM
THE OCEAN RACE
GO CIRCULAR
GO CIRCULAR

Julien Champolion|polaRYSE/Holcim-PRB

595 miles in 24 hours: new record

Kevin Escoffier's *Holcim-PRB*, the dominant leader of The Ocean Race, has set a new 24-hour IMOCA record by covering a breathtaking 595.26 nautical miles over 11-12 March, 2023. The crew of *Holcim-PRB* maintained an average pace of 24.8 knots racing at near 50°S on the race's long Southern Ocean stage.

The previous official IMOCA record was set by Alex Thomson on *Hugo Boss* back in 2018 (solo) at 539.71 miles, while the crew of *Charal* had smashed out a 558-mile run on the delivery back from the Route du Rhum last December (which couldn't be ratified).

Escoffier's *Holcim-PRB* team was also first through the Tasmanian scoring gate on the Southern Ocean leg. They collect a full five points for passing longitude 143°E, maintaining a perfect scoreline since the start of The Ocean Race in January.

"The rhythm of these last hours of racing has been set by a big push to the scoring gate and this first set of points for leg 3," Escoffier explained shortly after. "We built a big lead early this leg, but the others caught a favourable weather front and there was nearly a re-start a few days ago. But we managed to hold on to a bit of a lead, which we really wanted to keep for the scoring gate."

However, despite *Holcim-PRB* building a 600-mile advantage at one stage on the 12,000-mile leg from Cape Town to Itajai, a series of high pressure ridges saw the fleet compress dramatically – at one point just five miles separated the four boats after around 6,000 miles of racing.

Malizia
A RACE WE MUST WIN

***Malizia* took the lead to be first round Cape Horn**

Julien Champolion|polaRYSE/Holcim-PRB

Having overcome earlier mast damage, Boris Herrmann's *Team Malizia* was able to get past *Holcim-PRB* to lead the fleet around the symbolic Cape Horn on March 27 – not a scoring gate of the course, but a hugely significant waypoint for the fleet.

Skipper Herrmann, who was rounding the Cape for the sixth time, said: "Cape Horn holds

Ellen's Trust celebrates 20 years

The Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust marks its 20th anniversary this year. Since taking five young people from Great Ormond Street sailing in 2003, the charity hopes to welcome 750 on adventures in 2023 alone. Ancasta Group is also supporting the Trust: for every new boat sold, Ancasta will donate the cost for one young person to go on a Trust four-day sailing trip.

ellen macarthur

Martin Allen Photography

Below: the *Holcim-PRB* crew celebrate their 24-hour speed run record

Julien Champolion|polaRYSE/Holcim-PRB

many memories for me, and crossing this line in first almost means more than winning the leg, not in terms of points but in terms of what it means. I am proud of the team and this boat! The boat has really proved itself in the Southern Ocean and shown how tough she is."

The 12,000-mile leg from Cape Town to Itajai has taken its toll on the fleet. Just a day before rounding Cape Horn, *Malizia* crew member Rosalin Kuiper was thrown from her bunk and hit her head, suffering a cut and a concussion. *Team 11th Hour Racing* has also been nursing damage to their IMOCA, including a badly damaged mainsail which prevents them from sailing with a single reef, and delaminating rudders which required extensive carbon repairs.

We'll take a look at how the fleet contended with the longest ever stage in the crewed around the world race next issue.

Whale collision sinks yacht in minutes

American cruiser Rick Rodriguez and the crew of his 1976 Kelly Peterson 44 *Raindancer* made headlines around the world in March when they suffered a freak collision with a whale during a Pacific crossing. *Raindancer* rapidly took on water and sank within around 15 minutes some 1,000 miles from French Polynesia.

While the sinking was dramatic, the incident demonstrates how smart responses by the *Raindancer* crew and other yachts, and the use of both conventional communication channels and latest technology, led to them being quickly rescued. We'll have an in-depth report in a forthcoming issue to share lessons learned.

Distantseas.com

Jean-Marie Liot/Apivia

Alex Thomson buys controversial IMOCA

Four-time British Vendée Globe competitor Alex Thomson has announced that his team is purchasing the ex-*Apivia* IMOCA 60 that had been purchased by Banque Populaire, and which Clarisse Crémer was set to race in the 2024 Vendée Globe before she was controversially dropped by the Banque Populaire team.

Jean-Marie Liot/Alea

Alex Thomson

Clarisse Crémer

François Van Malleghem

FRA 79, raced as Charlie Dalin's former *Apivia*, is widely considered one of the fastest IMOCA 60s in the fleet of the most recent generation. The Guillaume Verdier design was built by CDK with input from François Gabart's MerConcept and launched in 2019. Dalin sailed *Apivia* to cross the finish of the 2020/21 Vendée Globe in 1st place, and also took 1st in the 2019 Transat Jacques Vabre, and 2nd in the 2022 Route du Rhum at the end of last year, his final race in the boat.

While Thomson has confirmed that he will not be competing in the 2024 Vendée Globe, rumours were rife about who would be taking the helm with plenty of conjecture from fans who hoped to see Crémer return as skipper. At the time of going to press Thomson's team weren't able to confirm or deny that, but watch this space for more.

Guirec Soudée

Farewell Monique

Monique the sailing hen, who famously accompanied French solo skipper Guirec Soudée on a five-year around the world voyage, has died. Soudée's unique companion lived to the age of nine, the Rhode Island Red even laying eggs for Soudée while on a transatlantic voyage and icebound in Greenland. Monique and Soudée's adventures are the subject of several books. See page 61 to read about one of them.

The International Multihull Show in La Grande-Motte, France, takes place from April 12-16, 2023

Spring boat shows bloom

The shift in popularity from exhibition centre-based boat shows to in-water shows continues, with two new events taking place in April 2023 in the UK, as well as the ever-growing International Multihull Show in La Grande-Motte, France.

The Multihull Show takes place from 12-16 April. While there may not be the plethora of brand new models making their debuts at this year's event we've been accustomed to, there is still a large mix of the latest multihulls on offer. Catamarans on show include six Balis, six Leopards (including powercats), four Lagoons and three each from Fountaine Pajot, Marsaudon Composites and Outremer. The latter could steal the show by showcasing the new 52 as its world premiere – *Yachting World* will be featuring an exclusive multi-day boat test on this model in our July issue. See **multicoque-online.com**

Next is the South Coast Boat Show, now in its fifth year, from 21-23 April at MDL's Ocean Village Marina in Southampton, UK. For the first time this year the South Coast show combines with the Green Tech Boat Show, and showcases sustainable marine technologies. Yachts on show include Arcona, Beneteau, Dragonfly, Dufour, Elan, Excess, Fountaine Pajot, J-Boats, Jeanneau, Lagoon, Nautitech, Neel and X-Yachts, plus over 40 onshore exhibitors. Entry is free though visitors are invited to make an appointment to view specific boats. See **mdlmarinas.co.uk**

The newest addition to the UK boat show calendar is London Luxury Afloat, which returns to St Katharine Docks in central London from 18-22 April for its second year. British luxury bluewater cruising brand Oyster Yachts will have three models on display in London, the 495, 565 and 595, alongside prestige British powerboat brands such as Princess and Sunseeker. See more at **londonluxuryafloat.com**

Meanwhile, following declining exhibitor and visitor numbers, the Paris Nautic Boat Show, France's premier indoor show which took place in December, will not be held in 2023. Instead a new show is scheduled for October 2024 that includes in-water and exhibition hall space outside central Paris on the Seine. This leaves Boot Düsseldorf as the undisputed king of European winter shows, having bounced back strongly this year after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. The world's largest indoor boat show next takes place from 20-28 January 2024.

Yann Riou/polaRYSE/Gitana

Ultims solo race set for 2024

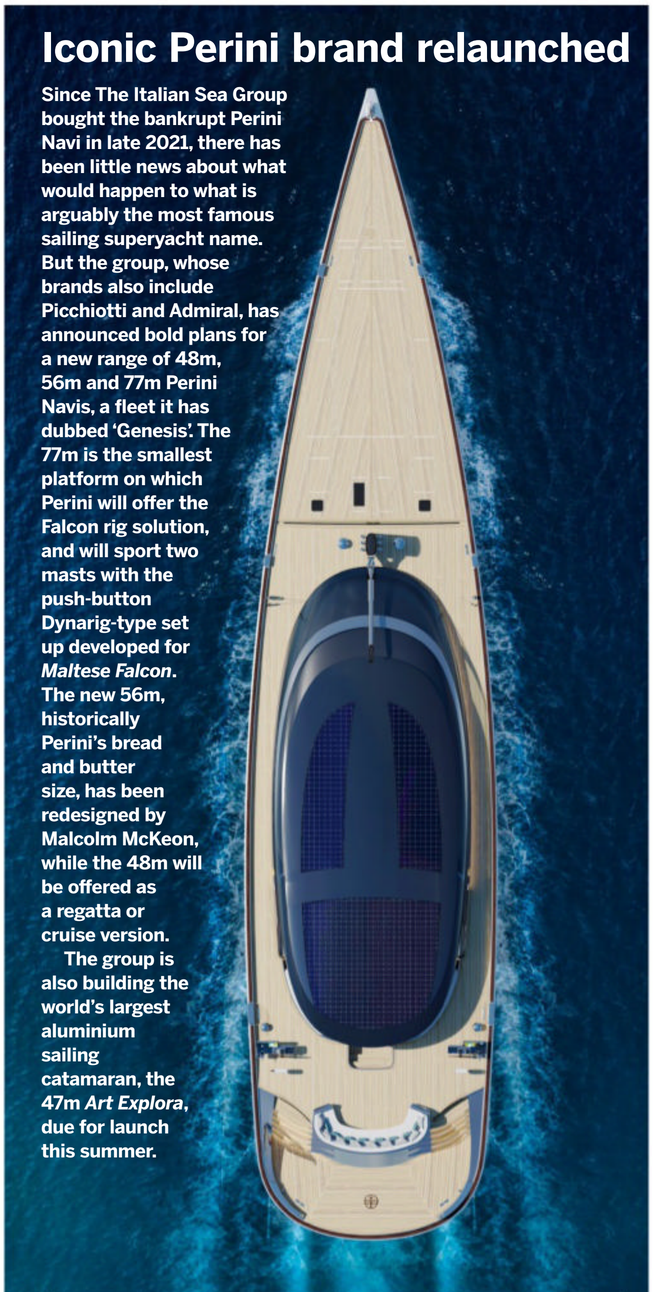
Details have been published of the Arkea Ultim Challenge-Brest, the solo, non-stop around the world race in giant Ultim trimarans. The inaugural around the world race for the single-handed 100-footers will start from Brest on 7 January 2024. Racing will be organised by OC Sport Pen Duick. There is a minimum entry requirement of four boats, and a maximum limit of eight. Currently five teams have entered, with three – Charles Caudrelier on *Maxi Edmond de Rothschild*, Thomas Coville on *Sodebo Ultim 3*, and Armel Le Cleac'h's *Maxi Banque Populaire* – having met the qualification criteria. See more at ultim-challenge.com

Hanse's record orders

Hanse Yachts/Nico Krauss

After what it describes as a 'turbulent fiscal year' Hanse Yachts reports that its order book is at an all-time high with a value of more than €260 million. The company, which includes Hanse, Moody and Dehler brands, has also made efficiencies to clear the backlog generated by the pandemic in new yacht construction.

Iconic Perini brand relaunched



Since The Italian Sea Group bought the bankrupt Perini Navi in late 2021, there has been little news about what would happen to what is arguably the most famous sailing superyacht name. But the group, whose brands also include Picchiotti and Admiral, has announced bold plans for a new range of 48m, 56m and 77m Perini Navis, a fleet it has dubbed 'Genesis'. The 77m is the smallest platform on which Perini will offer the Falcon rig solution, and will sport two masts with the push-button Dynarig-type set up developed for *Maltese Falcon*. The new 56m, historically Perini's bread and butter size, has been redesigned by Malcolm McKeon, while the 48m will be offered as a regatta or cruise version.

The group is also building the world's largest aluminium sailing catamaran, the 47m *Art Explora*, due for launch this summer.

Sailing Energy/Superyacht Cup

Superyacht Cup widens appeal

Entries are open for this year's Superyacht Cup Palma, with organisers introducing a new 90ft class for the 2023 event. The new class addition is focused on providing competition for the numerous cruiser-racers in the 80-100ft LOA rating range who are already actively racing.

There is also a non-spinnaker 'Corinthian' class for owners wanting a more relaxed experience and, if numbers allow, a J-Class fleet. Among the spectacular Js racing will be 2022 returnees *Velsheda* and *Svea*. There will also be a conventional superyacht fleet.

Racing takes place from 21-24 June in the Bay of Palma. *Yachting World* is media partner, and we'll be covering it in our forthcoming issues of *Supersail World*.

Franco Origlia/Getty

Cayard quits US Sailing

With the Paris 2024 Olympic Games on the horizon, the US team is in disarray as boss Paul Cayard announced his resignation from the organisation. "Unfortunately, over the past couple of months, the US Sailing Association and I had a complete breakdown on several levels," he said. "I am not a quitter, but I do know when it is time to go."

Left: Hattie Rogers won the Waszp Inspire final in San Francisco. Below: she was part of the Rogers family team competing in the 2019 Rolex Fastnet Race aboard Contessa 32 *Assent*

James Tomlinson/Waszp

Youngest Yachtsman of Year

Hattie Rogers, aged just 22, has become the youngest ever recipient of the Yachtsman of the Year Award. Rogers, from Lymington, received the prestigious prize in March for her successes in foiling last year, including winning the SailGP Waszp Inspire Grand Final in San Francisco.

While she is only at the beginning of her sailing career, Rogers's pathway demonstrates how quickly the sport is changing, especially for female high performance sailors. She hails from a traditional sailing dynasty – her grandfather was the late Jeremy Rogers, creator of the Contessa 32, and she is the daughter of yacht designer Simon Rogers. In 2019 she competed in the Rolex Fastnet Race on the Contessa 32 *Assent* with Simon and her uncle, Kit Rogers. However, she followed a different route into top level competition.

"I think for me, my pathway has just been about enjoying my sailing. That's always been the biggest thing for me, just keep on loving it. But I grew up sailing on the Solent with grandpa and dad in the Contessa, and then on the Salterns Lake in Lymington being pushed around in my Oppie in waders by dad, and then in a scow, sailing to get ice cream up the river. It very, very quickly became more competitive though."

Rogers competed in the Optimist at a high level, winning both British junior and senior Ladies National Champion titles. However, while many of her peer group progressed into the double-handed 420 class, she opted for the 29er.

"It was tricky because I didn't know a lot of people in 29ers, but I thought that asymmetric sailing and apparent wind sailing were going to really be most relevant in the future, so that's why I decided to go for that route," she reflects.

Rogers and her crew were selected to represent GBR at international events, as well as for the RYA's Podium Potential Pathway. She was due to compete at the Youth Worlds for the British Team – traditionally an early indicator of Olympic potential – before a setback saw Rogers reassess her ambitions.

"Coming through the Junior and Youth Pathways, it was all geared to winning medals at Youth Worlds, Youth Europeans, and then you go into Olympic sailing. I had a bit of a moment, I guess, because I qualified for the Youth Worlds with Emily Covell back in 2017, and we were all set to go to Sanya in China.

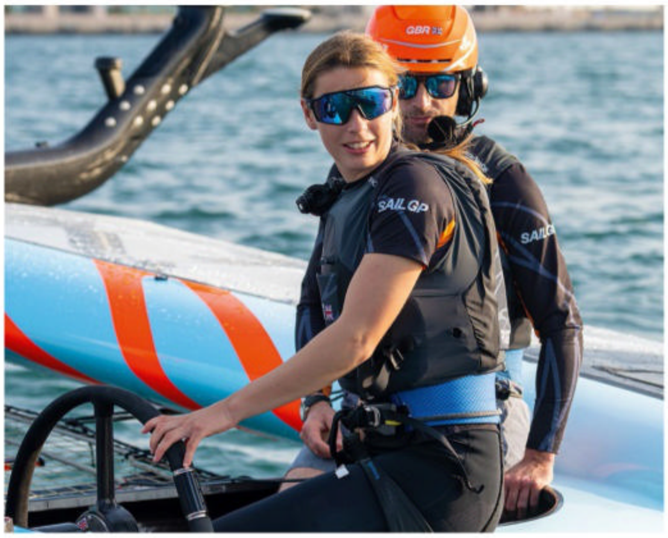
"But a week before flying out, Emily had an injury. So that meant we couldn't go. From that, it allowed me to focus on my A levels and get into university. But it was also a moment of reflection where I looked at the whole of sailing and which way it was going."

Rogers opted to combine a four-year Ship Science degree at Southampton University with a foiling Waszp campaign. "I knew foiling was

Pyewacket wins RORC Caribbean 600

Roy Disney's *Pyewacket 70* claimed both monohull line honours and the overall IRC win in the 2023 RORC Caribbean 600. The latest *Pyewacket* is a turbocharged Volvo 70 with a taller mast, lighter hull and deeper keel than the original box-rule ocean racers, and completed the course in 42h 45m 06s. Alex Thomson on Ken Howery's Gunboat 68 *Tosca* (USA) won the MOCRA Class.

Tim Wright/photoaction.com



Louis Goldman

Rogers was called up for the Emirates Great Britain SailGP team in San Francisco, pictured here with team principal Sir Ben Ainslie

going to be the way the sport was going. But it was a very calculated call because it was really expensive," she recalls.

Last summer, Rogers was top female sailor at the UK SailGP Waszp Inspire event, held in Plymouth alongside the F50 racing. That earned her a place in the Waszp Inspire final in San Francisco, which she also won.

STEPPING UP A GEAR

While in San Francisco she got the call of a lifetime to stand in on the British SailGP team, as both Hannah Mills and Hannah Diamond were unable to sail.

"It was quite overwhelming because I literally got a call when I was about to go Waszp racing – so it was into a taxi across the city, straight into safety training, and then put on an F50 in 25 knots. So it was quite full on – even getting across the boat, and not falling over! It was fine after a few tacks, but it all happened very fast."

Team skipper Ben Ainslie gave Rogers a turn on the wheel, where she clocked a top speed of 48.2 knots. She was later invited to train with the British SailGP team at the Dubai event.

Rogers is also a member of the Athena pathway squad, the British programme to form Youth and Women's America's Cup teams for the AC40 foiling monohulls. Rogers is currently trialling for both the women's and youth squads.

Her goals for the next couple of years? "I want to win the Women's and Youth America's Cup and see sailing change so that women are more included and have equal opportunities."

DPPI Media/Alamy

Syd Fischer

1927-2023

Legendary Australian yachtsman Syd Fischer has died at the age of 95. A consummate sportsman, Fischer was awarded an OBE in 1971 for multiple sporting achievements including rugby, football and surf lifesaving, but it was sailing he was most famed for despite not taking up the sport until his mid-30s.

He managed and funded five Australian America's Cup campaigns, including Young Australia in 2000, the only one to contest for the 'Auld Mug'. He was also widely called Australia's greatest offshore sailor, skippering his series of *Ragamuffin* yachts. He competed in 42 Rolex Sydney Hobart races, winning line honours twice in 1988 and 1990 as well as overall victory in 1992. He took part in eight Admiral's Cups, skippering on seven occasions, and in 1971 won the Fastnet Race and One Ton Cup.

A property developer by trade, he was known to be straight-talking and no sufferer of fools, with a litany of famous phrases attributed to him, including "Trust is good, checking is better".

Action Plus Sports Images/Alamy

Syd Fischer's *Ragamuffin* at the start of the 2015 Rolex Sydney Hobart Race

NEXT MONTH

ON SALE 11 MAY

James Mitchell/WCC

The great ARC gear survey

How do you ensure you're as self-sufficient as possible during an ocean crossing? Learning from others is a good start. We asked all 245 skippers in last year's ARC and ARC+ rallies detailed questions about their autopilots and self steering systems, and quizzed them for their top tips on self reliance and making running repairs at sea

Ultimate offshore refit

When Andy Schell of 59° North took on an ex-charter Farr 65 he knew he could create his ultimate offshore cruising boat, it was just going to take a serious refit. He explains how to manage a big project and reveals the fantastic results

90 days in Europe

If you have three months to cruise in Europe – whether to fit around work, school, or Schengen requirements – where would you go? Janneke Kuysters plots dreamy itineraries for 90 days of maximum cruising enjoyment with minimal paperwork

Reefing double-handed

Pip Hare has expert advice on how to get your sail plan balanced upwind when sailing short-handed, and reefing techniques for stress-free sail reduction

On test: Italia Yachts 12.98

This slippery new cruiser-racer combines Italian clean lines with impressive build quality. Rupert Holmes took it for a test sail

Francesco & Roberta Rastrelli/Blue Passion

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MATTHEW SHEAHAN

COULD A SHORTER SERIES OF ATLANTIC RACES ATTRACT YOUNGER OFFSHORE TALENT TO THE OCEAN RACE ONCE MORE?

According to the winner of the last Volvo Ocean Race, Charles Caudrelier, skippers for the current Ocean Race had little trouble in finding crew that wanted to do the race, they just didn't find many that wanted to do Leg 3, which should be finishing just about as you read this.

Despite the appeal of a fully crewed ride aboard an IMOCA, it seemed few fancied a 13,000-mile 30-plus day Southern Ocean sleigh ride from Cape Town to Itajai. Which is strange – normally there's a queue as long as one outside a UK passport office for those keen to send a 60-footer offshore.

It's true that Leg 3 was the longest in the history of this fully crewed race, but it's also far shorter than a solo lap of the planet in the Vendée Globe, so surely it can't have been just the distance that was putting sailors off?

The problem is that the latest generation of IMOCAs takes the class into largely unknown territory with boats that are much more powerful and way faster. With a full crew they're heavier too, more highly loaded and likely to be pushed far harder. Despite testing, no one really knew going into the stage how the boats and crews would cope.

> **'This race could reinvent itself for the better'**

The start wasn't auspicious. Before the fleet had even fully exited Cape Town's notorious bay *Biotherm* broke its mainsheet system in a gybe and *11th Hour Racing Team* had broken battens. Three days later and *Guyot Environnement* was returning to Cape Town having discovered a structural problem with the hull. Worrying stuff. Shortly afterwards *Team Malizia* reported a big split in the top of their mast.

Crews have been making creative repairs to keep their boats going on this super long leg, and the racing has been knife-edge close. But whatever the result Leg 3 looks set to define this edition of the Ocean Race. If the remaining four make it intact to Itajaii the future of the IMOCAs in this race looks bright. But if any more teams have to pull out in Brazil due to structural failures and the race could be reduced to a game of last man standing.

It strikes me that there is another way in which this race could redefine and reinvent itself for the better.

Just before the race kicked off in Alicante the organisers had to perform a frustrating U-turn in withdrawing the VO65 fleet from a full lap of the planet. Instead, the fleet of six VO65s would do the first leg and the last two, basically a handful of legs in the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea. The climb down became the elephant in the room.

While on the face of it in Alicante the older generation VO65s bulked up the dockside fleet to make a good spectacle for the visitors, those in the know were aware that the combined fleet wasn't the full deal. Frankly we were a little bit down about it. But try telling that to the large numbers of young crew that were getting ready to take part in the opening leg from Alicante to Cape Verde: they were buzzing.

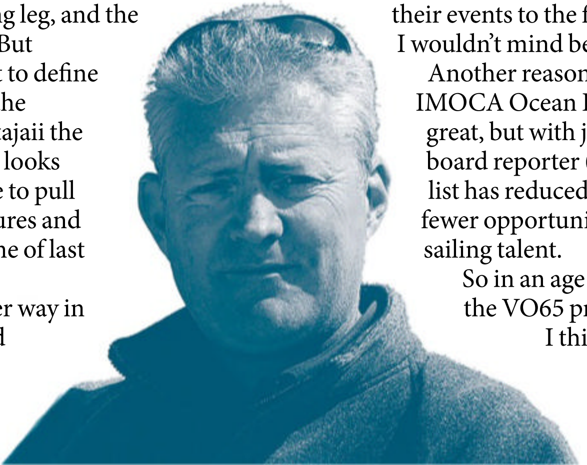
After Leg 1 finished in Cape Verde some of the teams were planning to head to the Caribbean to take part in a few regattas over there before coming back to Europe in time for the last two Ocean Race legs. They were hoping they might even get a group of them to do it and so create a mini circuit [see our report on the St Maarten Heineken on page 44, which saw four VO65s racing with VO70s].

And then the penny dropped for me. Why not set up just that next time? For young teams to race the robust VO65s on a series of legs around the Atlantic, legs that would be short enough to allow a much greater number of sailors to take time out of their normal lives, but also experience true deep water offshore racing?

Perhaps some of the Caribbean events could count as part of the 'Atlantic' Ocean Race circuit without having to create a whole new series from scratch by opening up their events to the fleet of six VO65s. I wouldn't mind betting they'd love it.

Another reason for doing this is that if the IMOCA Ocean Race experiment works that's great, but with just four crew and one on board reporter (OBR) on each boat the crew list has reduced even further and there are now fewer opportunities than ever to bring in new sailing talent.

So in an age where creating pathways is key, the VO65 project would surely provide that. I think it's a winner. ■



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Sailing Towards **Carbon Neutrality** with ODSea LAB
by Fountaine Pajot

NIKKI HENDERSON

HOW DO YOU COMPARE ONE SAILING ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST ANOTHER? IT MIGHT BE TIME FOR A RETHINK FOR SAILING'S TOP AWARD

The Yachtsman of the Year Award was set up in 1955 to celebrate the achievements of the best of British sailing. The trophy is awarded by members of the Yachting Journalists' Association (YJA) to the Briton whose attainment in the previous year 'most justifies such a title'.

When I won in 2018 I'd only heard the phrase 'Yachtsman of the Year' in the documentary *Maiden* as it was awarded to my fellow 'yachtsman' and joint winner, Tracy Edwards MBE. When I heard about my nomination, I had to research the award to figure out what it was even being awarded for.

It appears I wasn't the only one. Charlie Dixon, who was awarded the Young Sailor of the Year title last month, said when interviewed afterwards: "I didn't really know much about it until about a week and a half ago. I had to ask my coach 'What's this?'"

> **'Celebrations like this are so important'**

This year's winner, talented foiling sailor Hattie Rogers, just became the youngest person to ever be named Yachtsman of the Year (see page 14). Though she said it was a surprise to be nominated, she's very familiar with the award's significance – her grandfather, Jeremy Rogers, won the trophy in 1974.

A huge congratulations to both Hattie and Charlie. What an honour it is to have your name on a plaque alongside the greatest sailors of our history – Sir Francis Chichester, Dame Ellen MacArthur (twice), Sir Ben Ainslie (four times and counting...) and many others. The trophy – crafted out of wood and shaped like a buoy – is adorned with knights, Olympic gold medallists, and world record holders.

But sadly it appears the Yachtsman of the Year Award is losing some of its significance within our younger sailing community.

Is this a problem? Yes. Celebrations like this are so important. We all enjoy an opportunity to applaud our heroes. Highlighting inspirational people can be the encouragement we need to aspire to higher goals. The Yachtsman of the Year Award has the potential to drive positivity, growth and ambition into the sailing community. But how do we make it more relevant today?

To have just one award for yachting is impractical. Nominations have included Olympic dinghy racers, record breaking solo circumnavigators, and an adventurer who performed a heroic rescue in the Southern Ocean – all remarkable feats, but incomparable. To award one prize to a single 'yachtsman' is like hosting the Baftas and giving just one award to 'Film-man of the Year'.

Sub-categories would solve this, allowing us to more accurately compare achievements and make the award more inclusive. An award for Trainer of the Year would highlight the unsung heroes of the sailing community who tirelessly introduce thousands of young people into sailing each year. An environmental impact award could celebrate the organisations running climate research expeditions and safeguarding our oceans. There are countless charities that never quite make the shortlist, forgotten creatives who are promoting sailing to huge online audiences, the cruising community is entirely unrepresented, and what about the family teams who quietly compete in the Fastnet and Round the Island races?

The historic Yachtsman of the Year Award itself could be awarded to one of the category winners that has made the most overall impact into yachting that year.

I can't continue without a note on the name – I think it's time for a change. Yachtsperson of the Year doesn't sound so awful to me. 'Yachtsman' makes anyone who does not identify as a yachts-man feel like an imposter.

Introducing categories would solve another problem. If an award feels unfair, people lose interest. Right now, winning Yachtsman of the Year is a comparatively easy task in some years – and nigh on impossible in others. Unlike many other sports, yachting doesn't have a regular schedule. Some years are quiet, and I imagine the committee has a fairly simple job putting together a shortlist from British sailors who won world titles that season. Other years are full to the brim with events, such as 2024 which is shaping up to have the America's Cup, the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, the Clipper Race finish, start of the Vendée Globe, and plenty more. I don't envy anyone who has to select the most worthy British sailors from that cohort! ■

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Jim Hooper/SV Polaris

PACIFIC CALLING

A PACIFIC OCEAN CROSSING CAN BE SPECTACULAR, BUT ALSO DAUNTING. KATE ASHE-LEONARD HAS ADVICE ON WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Coffee in hand, I gaze out from our cockpit across the flat lagoon of the palm-fringed coral atoll in Fakarava. We are in the Tuamotus, French Polynesia. Yesterday we swam with hundreds of sharks, this afternoon will be spent kiteboarding. It's a destination we dreamed of long before we had a boat to bring us here.

Inspired by the many adventurers, authors and sailors who came before, we wanted to spend at least a year in French Polynesia, taking our time to explore this country's many delights, before continuing on across the Pacific. But making the decision to enter the world's biggest ocean was not taken lightly.

For many cruisers on the Atlantic side, deciding to transit the Panama Canal and enter the Pacific seems like a point of no return. The Canal's imposing gates closing behind you are symbolic: the end of one journey leading to the beginning of another. Entering the Pacific is a huge milestone in a global circumnavigation.

We spent some time soul searching to determine if we ▶

Jim Hooper/SV Polaris

were ready to take on some of the longest ocean passages in the world together. Our planned route from Panama to the Marquesas was 4,000 miles, with an optional stop at Galapagos, 1,000 miles in. That meant many days and nights at sea – for us, sailing double-handed – and a lot of potential wear and tear on our Catana 47. We also had to consider the sheer distance from home: French Polynesia is some 15,000 miles from Europe, making it more complicated and expensive to get back, or to have guests.

Planning the Pacific leg made us re-examine our longer-term goals too. Were we really doing a full global circumnavigation, or entering the Pacific to explore one last ocean before eventually selling up in New Zealand or Australia? With 12,000 miles under our belt so far, we felt ready, and still wanted to complete a circumnavigation. After our year in French Polynesia we will cruise the Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, New Caledonia and then Australia.

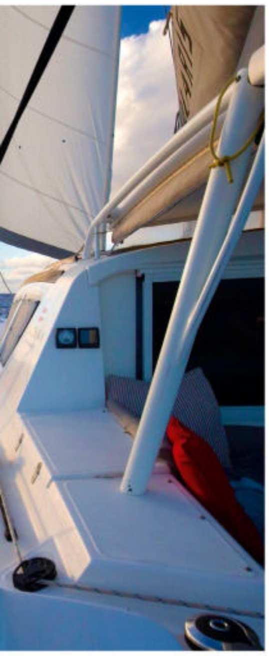
PACIFIC READY

When making the decision of whether to take on a Pacific crossing, the significant practical challenges and costs had to be weighed up too. At a minimum we needed to factor in a haul-out in Panama, arrange a long stay visa in Panama, transit the Panama Canal, with all the agent service fees that incurs, and organise a three-week stop at the Galapagos islands. We needed to ensure that both we and *Polaris* were set up for remote cruising so as to reduce our dependence on the people and places we'd encounter. We'd need plenty of spares and be certain that we'd acquired the experience, knowledge and confidence to be capable of fixing breakages. We had to liaise with our insurance company to agree terms and coverage for sailing the Pacific and staying in French Polynesia during cyclone season.

After a month exploring Colombia by land and another month cruising Panama's San Blas islands, we sailed to Shelter Bay Marina where we'd spend five weeks preparing ourselves and *Polaris* for the biggest passages of our lives. We had *Polaris*'s bottom paint redone, some through-hulls changed, we installed new rudder bearings and had two of our four sails serviced. We inspected all rigging and

Above left: crystal clear waters for *Polaris* at Fakarava in the Tuamotus. Above right: Panama to the Marquesas is 4,000 miles of open water passagemaking. Above: Kate Ashe-Leonard sail trimming. Right: South Seas paradise: stunning Bora Bora

Olivier Parent/Alamy



checked every system on the boat. We also began to prepare for our visit to the Galapagos by working through the list of requirements, as sent by our agent there.

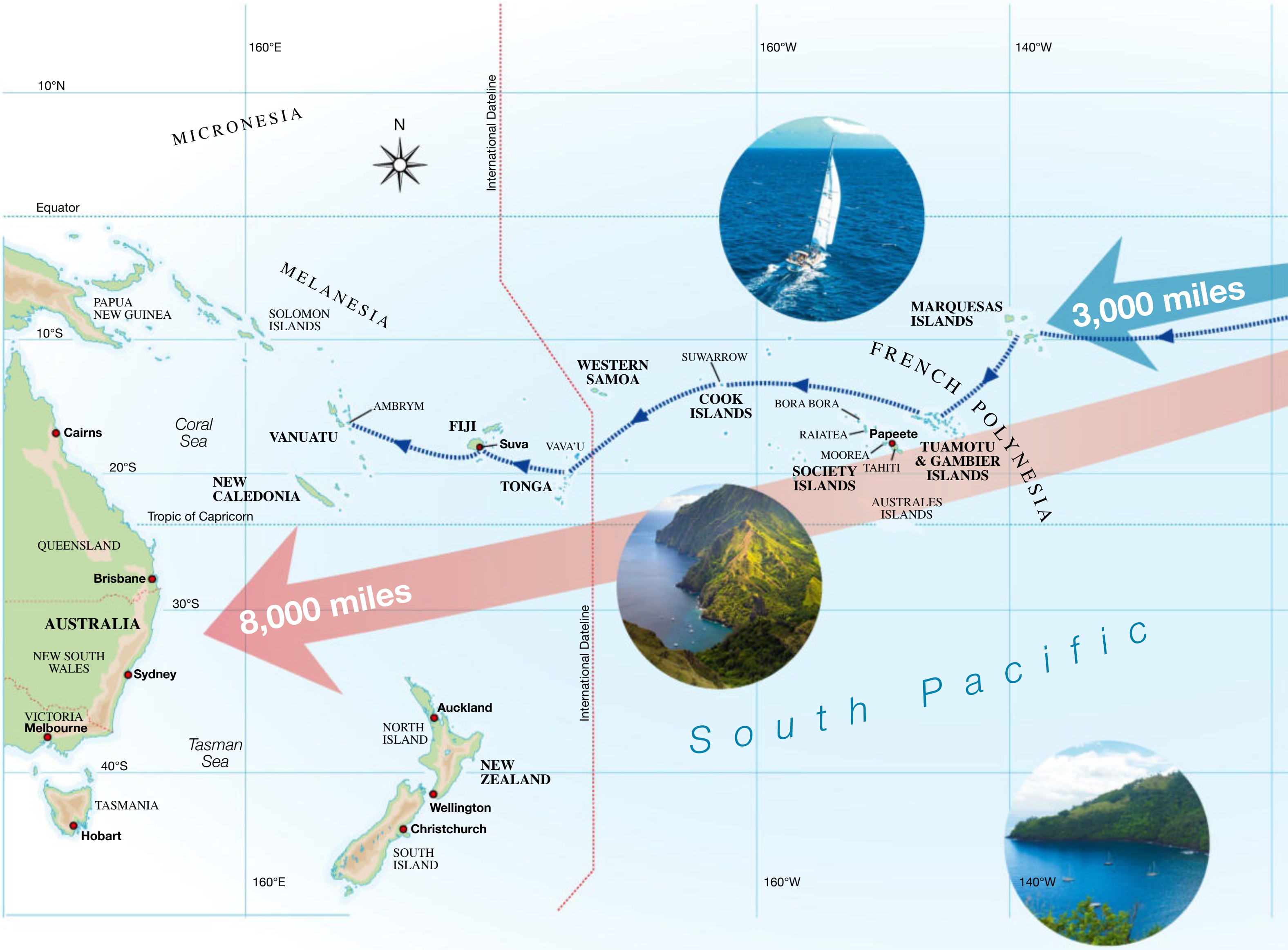
Provisioning for both ocean passages, with enough supplies to last many months after our arrival in French Polynesia, was a gradual process carried out over multiple trips using Shelter Bay Marina's free shuttle bus and later, after we transited the canal, via taxis which took us all over Panama City.

We arrived in Shelter Bay in late February, which is peak time for traffic transiting the canal. Like us, many boats had sailed to Panama after the Caribbean hurricane season ended in November and were making use of the marina's good amenities as they made final preparations.

There are numerous rallies on tight schedules going through around then too. In fact, we ended up behind both the Oyster World Rally and the Grand Large World Odyssey while waiting to secure a transit date. With many dates block-booked we couldn't even get an appointment with the 'Admeasurer' to come and measure the boat until the busiest time had passed. Next time around we'll find out which rallies are transiting and endeavour to get in ahead of them.

In parallel to all this we began the process of applying for Jim's long stay visa for French Polynesia as the three-month visa offered to non-EU nationals would not be enough time to take in this vast country. The visa must be applied for before arrival in French Polynesia, so we applied while in Panama. The application lead time seems to vary but the whole process took us five weeks, including three visits to the French embassy in Panama, but resulted in the vital EU visa stamp in Jim's passport. Once in French Polynesia copies of the same documents have to be resubmitted to secure a hard copy of the document known as a 'Carte de Sejour', a resident's permit allowing up to 12 months stay with option to extend. ▶

'We needed to be set up for remote cruising'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WESTERN SAMOA
SUWARROW
COOK ISLANDS
BORA BORA
RAIATEA
Papeete
MOOREA
TAHITI
SOCIETY ISLANDS
TUAMOTU & GAMBIER ISLANDS
AUSTRALES ISLANDS
AMBRYM
FIJI
Suva
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Hobart
Auckland
NORTH ISLAND
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A ROUTE ACROSS

We opted to arrive via the more well-travelled path, taking the traditional southern route to the Galapagos, staying there for three weeks to explore, before arriving at the Marquesas rather than the lesser visited Gambiers.

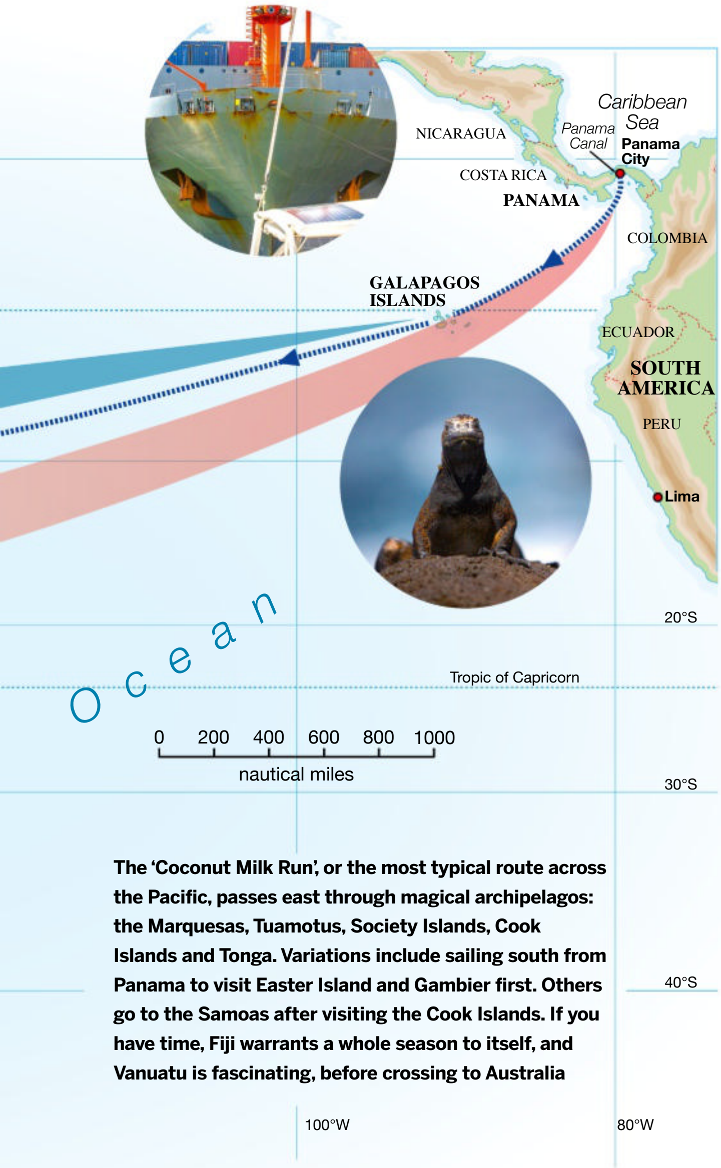
Anyone planning a Pacific crossing will be well advised to read Jimmy Cornell's voyage planners. He advises that skippers choosing to sail direct to the Marquesas are faced with a sometimes tough choice of whether to take the less popular northern route (staying north of the equator initially before crossing the equator further west), or to sail south immediately from Panama, cross the Equator and continue south of the Galapagos. While the northern route has, on average, more reliable winds earlier in the year (February and March), it rules out a stop in the Galapagos if those winds do not materialise and additional fuel, for example, is needed.

The other key decision is when to leave. Cruisers who plan to leave before cyclone season in French Polynesia tend to arrive as early as possible in the year to maximise their time there. You need to allow enough time to explore this extensive cruising ground while factoring in the time needed to cover the large distances to reach New Zealand or Australia by November-ish, the start of cyclone season. However, we planned to stay a year and remain in French Polynesia during cyclone season, so weren't under the same time pressure. We knew departing a bit later would also increase our chances of stronger tradewinds, which are at their best in the southern hemisphere winter, but were also keen to get going. So we opted for a compromise: we'd leave Panama for Galapagos around mid-March, and leave Galapagos for the Marquesas mid-April.

On the first leg to Galapagos we were not expecting much wind because the route would take us across the inter-tropical convergence zone, the area of low variable winds which are known to be even less reliable in February and March. We were prepared to motorsail most of the way and refuel in Galapagos. The second leg, however, we hoped would be very different as it would be a month later and, once south-west of Galapagos, we'd enter the trade wind belt.

FIRST STAGES

There was one last thing to do: on arrival in Galapagos our yacht would be met by a team of officials including two divers. If the underside is not found to be clean enough, officials will mandate that you sail 50 miles offshore, get in the water and clean it. Knowing this, we stopped off in Panama's Las Perlas islands for a few days to give the bottom one last scrub in crystal clear waters.



The 'Coconut Milk Run', or the most typical route across the Pacific, passes east through magical archipelagos: the Marquesas, Tuamotus, Society Islands, Cook Islands and Tonga. Variations include sailing south from Panama to visit Easter Island and Gambier first. Others go to the Samoas after visiting the Cook Islands. If you have time, Fiji warrants a whole season to itself, and Vanuatu is fascinating, before crossing to Australia

Our passage to Galapagos took seven days. We spent three glorious weeks exploring the islands of San Cristobal, Isabela and Santa Cruz. We swam and dived with hammerhead sharks, manta rays and sealions. We encountered the blue footed booby, enormous land tortoises, penguins and marine iguanas. We surfed waves and hiked dormant volcanoes. The vast majority of sites and activities are led by tour operators so incur extra costs but, as once-in-a-lifetime opportunities go, we didn't regret spending a single cent.

We left Santa Cruz after some last-minute provisioning in the local markets. The weather forecast was for ideal downwind conditions, and we anticipated a fast passage to Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas. It didn't take long for Jim and I to slip back into our familiar ocean passage routine of three-hour rotating watches.

The passage was a lively one, taking 18 days, but arriving in Nuku Hiva the sense of achievement felt unprecedented: we were on our way to becoming transpac sailors. We also arrived with lots of things to fix, including a mainsail that had torn itself from leech to luff below both the first and second reefing points, a gennaker to restitch and a halyard to resplice. Checking in took just a few minutes at the Gendarmerie and we were soon free to explore, prioritising finding baguettes, croissants and ▶

Ugo Fonolla /Oyster Yachts

Tor Johnson

Tor Johnson

Jim Hooper/SV Polaris

Clockwise from left: mirror-still anchorage for *Polaris*; abundant marine life on a reef off Fiji; Oyster 625 *Black Lion* in Fiji on the Pacific leg of the Oyster World Rally; Marina Apooiti on Raiatea, Tahiti

Jim Hooper/SV Polaris

‘We felt overwhelmed by the options of where to sail’

Above: ***Polaris*** **moored off Raroia atoll in the Tuamotus chain of islands**

freshly caught tuna. We noticed many yachts were covered in the same green slime as we had picked up during our long ocean passage, and fondly watched a couple of older sailors strolling the seafront promenade arm in arm, listing sideways as though they had been on a port tack all the way from Panama.

POLYNESIAN PARADISE

With five archipelagos to choose from in French Polynesia (the Society Islands, Tuamotu archipelago, Gambier Islands, Marquesas Islands, and Tubuai Islands) we initially felt overwhelmed by the options of where to sail in which months. We decided to spend our first two months, May and June, in the Marquesas, then July until early September in the Tuamotus, which is windy season and so great for kiteboarding. The next three months we spent in the Societies, where we swam with humpback whales during their migration season, and stocked up for our own onward journey west.

We first headed back to the Tuamotus for peak cyclone season, December to late February. Then, from March until May, we plan to cruise between Tahiti and Maupiti, from where we will depart French Polynesia. Some cruisers venture further, to the lesser travelled Australs archipelago to the south, or Gambiers to the east.

These days many skippers opt to spend cyclone season (November-April) in French Polynesia. The occurrence of cyclones here compared to the Caribbean is fractional. In the highest risk area of French Polynesia (the Society islands and Northern Tuamotus), only 13 cyclones were recorded between the years 1969 and 2010. In comparison there were 286 hurricanes in the same time frame in the North Atlantic basin, with the Antilles the most affected.

In French Polynesia the main factor to consider when estimating the likelihood of cyclones is the El Niño condition. This year we are in the third La Niña year and so the outlook is good for very low chance of cyclone activity. In an El Niño year a cautious owner might consider either leaving the region for New Zealand, taking their vessel to the Marquesas (which is completely out of the zone), hard standing it at one of the boat yards in the Societies or Tuamotus, or hunkering down in one of the hurricane holes on Tahiti or Raiatea.

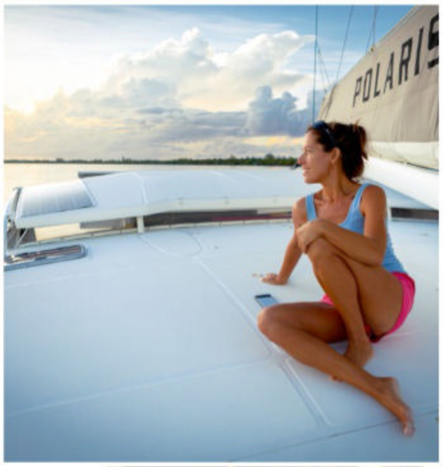
For insurance purposes we needed to be no further west than the Tuamotus or we risked not being covered for damage caused by a named storm. The weather so far has surprised us a little: it was cool in May when we arrived in the Marquesas, and we had many cloudy and unsettled days. We often struggled to top up our batteries sufficiently with solar and lived on strict water rations. In the Tuamotus in July it was cool at night, and from September and November in the Societies we experienced record high rainfall levels. Since cyclone season, however, we have thankfully had only a handful of stormy days.

A GROWTH EXPERIENCE

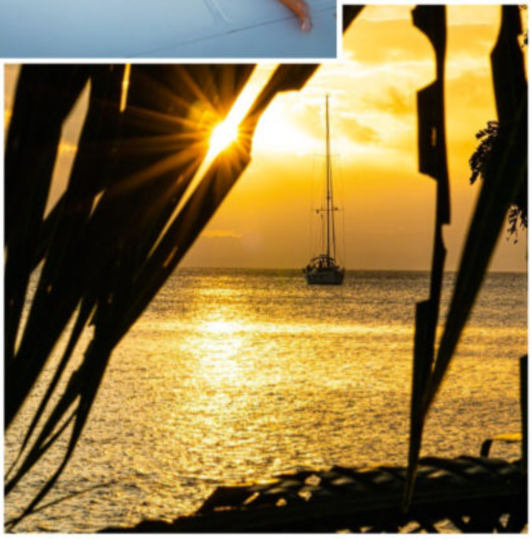
Our plan has always been to sail around the world, so we didn’t want to linger too long in the Caribbean. We were ready to push out of our comfort zone and head to the Pacific. The passages to Galapagos and onto Nuku Hiva were challenging but manageable, and we’re proud of how we handled them together. French Polynesia, meanwhile, has taught us how to slow down again. The lack of development in the places we stop gives us space to enjoy simple pleasures, and our days are spent reading, bread and yoghurt making, hunting for coconuts. We swim, snorkel and fish. If there’s wind we kiteboard, and if we have mountains nearby, we hike. The reefs are teeming with fish and larger pelagic species aren’t hard to find. The water can be the clearest and cleanest imaginable.

The beauty here is delicate, and we enjoy more and more the challenge of making do with what is available. Cruising the Pacific has made us become more self-sufficient than ever before, with the tools we have on board and the skills we have acquired to use them. We need nothing more. ■

Jim Hooper/SV Polaris



Left: the author watches a sunset in the Tuamotus. Below: golden Pacific sunset during the 2022 Oyster World Rally



Ugo Fonolla

Kate Ashe-Leonard from Dublin, Ireland, and Jim Hooper from London live aboard their Catana 47 *Polaris*. They're currently spending a year in French Polynesia before heading west to Fiji as they continue their circumnavigation. Follow @sv_polaris on Instagram

POLYNESIA ESSENTIALS

★ CHARTS AND NAVIGATION

We quickly learned that detailed sailing books and charts are few and far between here. Downloading cruiser generated guides, known as 'compendiums', are near essential to fill the gap. We knew about the coral bommies and the need for careful eyeball navigation, as well as good planning to ensure you have proper light when traversing lagoons. But we didn't realise how crucial the satellite images, which we have now overlaid on our OpenCPN charts, would be. As well as Navionics on the chart plotter, on our laptop we now have two chart views and three different satellite views to choose from covering the entire Pacific. This is not just Google Earth but also Bing and ArcGIS. It is the combination of different images that offers best coverage: if you only have Google, for example, clouds in one image could cover a bommie, but other images may give a better view. One day as we crossed the atoll of Makemo, two other boats hit a bommie each (neither were using satellite images).

For anchoring, we feel having 100m as a minimum is ideal as if anchoring with 5:1 scope many anchorages demand up to 100m. We float our chain using fenders if there is a risk that we might wrap around a coral bommie.

★ CONNECTIVITY

At the post office we purchased local 'Vini' SIM cards. An annual data contract gave us over 100gb a month for a fraction of the cost on a pay-as-you-go arrangement. A proof of address was required, and we convinced the town hall to provide one for us. Across much of French Polynesia there is surprisingly good 4G reception with the odd exception. Even in the Tuamotus' bigger atolls we have found great connectivity. A signal booster helped in more remote locations.

★ PROVISIONING

French Polynesia is famously expensive. Alcohol is particularly pricey, costing 2-4 times as much as in the Caribbean. Other goods are also costly due to high import costs. We arrived well stocked but also quickly learned which shops get restocked with what and when. It's worth getting to know which local farms and gardens are selling – and trading – produce.

In the Marquesas an abundance of fresh fruit is grown locally, however vegetables can sometimes be hard to come by. In the Tuamotus fresh produce is extremely limited: supply ships are scheduled to deliver food once a week in many atolls, but these schedules are often interrupted so forward planning is important (see page 92 for more on provisioning for the tropics).

★ PRACTICALITIES

There are haul out facilities in Hiva Oa, Apataki, Tahiti, Raiatea. We hauled in Hiva Oa where they use a hydraulic trailer. It's a small, friendly, well-run yard with stunning views.

Healthcare is good across French Polynesia and excellent in Tahiti. As an extension of the French healthcare system, doctors and facilities are first class with many specialist services.

With planning, the distances within the country are manageable – weather dependent. From Fatu Hiva in the Marquesas to Raroia in the Tuamotus is 400 miles, Makatea in the Tuamotus to Tahiti is 120 miles, and Tahiti to Moorea only 15 miles. So, it's possible to be in the remote Tuamotus and yet, in the right conditions, reach the metropolis of Tahiti within a day.

For travelling home or receiving visitors it is a long and expensive journey, although do-able. There are 28 airports across French Polynesia, most of which are for domestic flights, however Tahiti has a busy international airport being serviced by eight international airlines, two of which are low-cost carriers offering flights via Los Angeles direct to Paris.

Nick Bubb and family sailed their Nautitech 40 *Quickstep Too* from Britain across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal and through the South Pacific to New Zealand

END OF THE ADVENTURE

NICK BUBB EXPLAINS WHY HE DECIDED TO SELL UP RATHER THAN SAIL HOME AFTER A PACIFIC VOYAGE

All good things have to come to an end sometime, don't they? We asked ourselves this question many times in August and September last year, along with a whole lot more. When to stop sailing, how to stop sailing, where to stop sailing, or where to go next?

The answer will be different for everybody but for us the main considerations revolved around what was right for the boys, and some economic realities. In Fiji, having explored some of the more remote islands and mulled over our options with cruising friends, we came to a decision.

Pushing on to get back to Europe was going to be a rush. We'd need to leave Fiji quickly and head for Vanuatu. After that it was getting late in the season to cross Torres Strait just north of Australia and we'd have wanted to go north of Papua New Guinea anyway (to Raja Ampat). Either way, if we were going to carry on round, we needed to leave soon and we weren't ready to quit paradise!

We also couldn't afford to be away for more than two years so we'd have to make it to Thailand for January, to cross the Indian Ocean in February before battling our way up the Red Sea to Suez and into the Mediterranean. This wasn't going to be the same downwind sleigh ride we'd had for the first 16,000 miles and by the end, the boat was going to be pretty battered.

The alternative was to spend more time in Fiji and then probably New Zealand before going home. We knew we'd be able to sell the boat pretty well as she was in good shape after a mini refit in Fiji. I suppose it's also true that home educating wasn't getting any easier and it felt like maybe it was time to get the boys back into school. The final nail in the coffin was a request for me to come back to my full-time job at Fauna & Flora a little earlier than planned. The decision was made: *Quickstep Too* would be sold and our little odyssey would end in the Pacific.

WHERE TO SELL

We next had to confirm where we wanted to go. Our realistic options were to sell in Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand or Australia.

There were many pros and cons but while it was better to sell from a tax perspective in Fiji or New Caledonia, sale prices are generally lower and you risked being trapped ▶

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***Quickstep Too* was hauled, surveyed and sold in New Zealand while the family took a campervan trip in the South Island to complete their adventure**

there for cyclone season, which was fast approaching.

Reviewing our options in Australia, we'd immediately have to import the boat and pay the duty and GST on arrival, if we wanted to advertise the boat there.

The arrangement was slightly different in New Zealand. We could arrive there without the boat advertised, secure a six-month visa and temporary import entry, and then request permission to sell at a later date. We'd only have to pay the duty and GST when we had a sale agreed. New Zealand was also where virtually all our cruising friends were headed and we were all keen to explore the country.

After initially thinking we'd manage the sale ourselves, we started to consider using a broker after meeting Kiwi Robbs Hielkema from 36 Degrees in Fiji.

We were eventually convinced that he'd get a better price than we would – with a lot less hassle – and he'd also handle all the import paperwork as part of the sale process. The fees for all these brokers are very similar, but all our communications with Hielkema were straightforward and it ended up being an easy decision to enlist his help.

We actually briefly advertised the boat in Fiji purely to test the market and, having attracted plenty of interest from buyers based in New Zealand, confirmed our plan. Our eventual buyer even flew up to Fiji to see the boat. It wasn't for sale or ready to view at that point but it's easy to find boats on AIS these days so he turned up to have a look!

NEW ZEALAND HANDOVER

After wrapping up our adventures in Fiji we headed south for New Zealand. With several complicated weather systems passing through, we ended up passing close to Minerva Reef (way east of the rhumbline) and sailing the long way round. Happily though, we arrived without drama into the wonderful Bay of Islands, and eventually Opua where Hielkema is based, in mid-November.

As planned, we checked in as overseas visitors and then later on, Hielkema applied for permission to sell the boat. We moved all our stuff into storage units in the Bay of Islands Marina and shortly afterwards the buyers came up to see her and a deal was struck, subject to survey.

While the survey was happening, we began preparing to return to the UK and also planning a campervan adventure on the South Island before we left New Zealand. As it turned out, the survey report took a while to appear and there were many minor points of negotiation.

This part was pretty painful, and with our flights to the UK booked for New Year's Eve, we felt the buyers ran the clock down a little to strengthen their negotiating position and the deal nearly fell apart – although Hielkema was happy to look after the boat if the sale hadn't completed before we needed to return to the UK.

Eventually a final deal was agreed and we were happy with the outcome. On reflection, I'd probably pay for a full survey from a big reputable company before advertising and tick off as many jobs as possible, to present a clean survey at the point of sale – it's certainly the easiest way to sell when you know there's plenty of interest in the boat.

The last challenge was getting our stuff home. We looked at various options but, in the end, Hielkema introduced us to a local removals company and they found us a 20ft container to share with another client. We're currently trying to convince HMRC that we don't need to pay VAT to bring our old stuff back into the UK!

Life back home has been a big adjustment but time is flying and it'll be summer soon! I wouldn't say that we've no regrets coming home but we're hugely grateful for the amazing adventures we've had and in no small part relieved to have 'transitioned out' relatively smoothly. ■

Professional racer Nick Bubb has competed in the Volvo Ocean Race, Transat Jacques Vabre, and Route du Rhum, among others. His wife, Sophie, is an ironman athlete and coach. They documented their cruising adventures on Instagram @OceanOdysseyCrew

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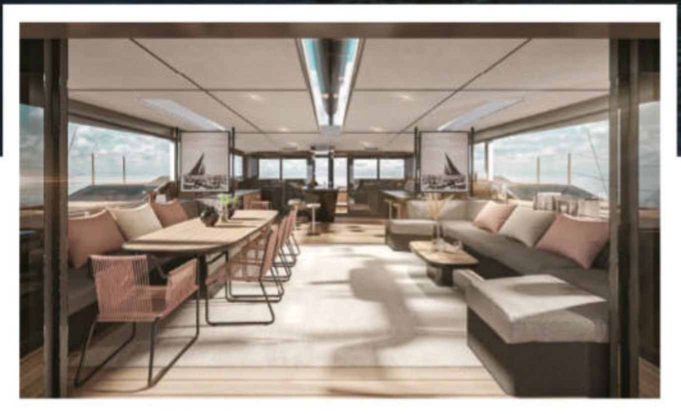

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ELEMENT

HAVING PAUSED THEIR PACIFIC CRUISE IN MO’OREA, JOSH SHANKLE AND RACHEL MOORE FIND WONDERMENT SWIMMING WITH HUMPBACK WHALES

Agápe moored off Mo'orea in French Polynesia

"Slip into the water, don't jump. Try not to splash, and follow me," our guide Torea hurriedly told us as the panga-style boat slowed to a stop, only 100m away from a sleeping giant.

"Stay together, stay close to me. Ready? Let's go!" As the boat clicked into neutral, Torea was already in the water and swimming away, urging us all to follow quickly. Lowering myself into the water, I barely had time to take in the vast blue void of the open ocean below me. By the time I took my first breath, he was already 10m away, kicking toward where he'd last seen the whale spout.

From the boat, the distance we had to swim didn't look far, but once in the water fighting the wind chop and current, I realised the 100m swim was going to take more effort than I'd realised. I'm unsure of how far we really swam or how long it took in the end, as the excitement and adrenaline rush distorted details. Once we reached the spot Torea believed the whale to have last been, we slowed our pace and searched the endless blue below us.

> ‘Time slowed to a stop as these magnificent beings rose to the surface’

He kept reminding us to stay together and stay close, which in the emptiness of the Pacific, I was happy to do.

We strained our eyes trying to make out a shape in the depths. Light rays pierced into the abyss, dancing around and playing tricks on our eyes. Then, slowly out of the blue expanse, a silhouette began to take shape. She didn’t seem to be moving, slowly ascending from the depths with ease and grace, seemingly unaware of our floundering, awkward presence. As she rose, her calf also came into view just below her.

Time slowed to a stop as these magnificent beings rose to the surface, just metres in front of us. I was torn between raising my GoPro to capture the sight, albeit viewed through a tiny LCD screen, or forgetting my camera to instead be fully present in the moment.

The mother humpback took one massive breath and with a gentle flick of her tail sank back below the surface, staying just within sight. Her calf, on the other hand, was feeling playful, and after a moment of hiding behind its mother, swam to the surface to gambol around our group.

It was a truly unforgettable encounter. To look into this sentient being’s massive eyes and see the curiosity, playfulness, and wonder within is nothing short of life-changing. We had several such meetings, and even after almost two hours of swimming with this mom and her calf, it was still not enough. Like a good showman, the whales always left us wanting more.

MIGRATORY PASSAGE

For millennia, these incredible cetaceans have travelled through the rich and diverse waters of our world. From gravity-defying acrobatics at the surface to swimming through the crushing pressures of the depths, whales have been exploring our planet’s ever-changing oceans for 50 ▶

Above: encounters with a humpback whale and her cub in the Pacific

Mo'orea is one of the premier whale watching locations in the world, with strict rules governing organised tours

million years. After being nearly hunted to extinction by whaling fleets, they are just now starting to make their comeback. It may seem like ancient history, but if you have a classic plastic or 1970s-era boat, as we do with our 37-year-old Tayana 42 *Agápe*, don't be surprised if your original transmission manual asks for Dexron type A or B oil – in other words, whale oil.

While we no longer have a can of sperm whale oil on board, these behemoths are still very much a part of our world as liveaboard cruisers. *Agápe*'s journey has been in parallel with these deep-sea voyagers since the start.

From our home port of Ventura, California, we sailed south along the coast of California and Mexico with pods of humpback and grey whales often alongside breaching, singing, and playing, sometimes a little too close for comfort. Every time we spotted the whales breaching or breathing at the surface, we slowed the boat down and it was all hands on deck as we tried to capture photos of the encounter. We joined them on their annual 10,000-mile migration south from the nutrient-rich feeding grounds of the Pacific Northwest into the warmer waters of Mexico and Central America. Our journey that year, in comparison, was a measly 2,000 miles.

From there, we made a big right turn to start our Pacific crossing, leaving our whale friends in the warm waters of

SWIMMING WITH WHALES

- French Polynesia rules state that boats must stay 100m away from the whales and on the reef side if they are close to shore.
- You are not allowed to motor directly in front of the whale or stop in their path. No chasing after the whales, approach slowly from the side where they can see you.
- Boats must leave engines on and in neutral as an acoustic aid to the whales. (You don't want a whale to breach on top of your boat!)
- Swimmers must stay 30m away, although the whales might decide to swim closer to you.
- No diving down; you must stay close to the surface.
- Boats and people are not allowed to approach or swim with whales in the passes or inside the lagoon.
- If a whale is in a pass, boats must stand off and wait to enter until the whale has left.

Below: who's watching who?

'To look into these massive eyes is life-changing'

Panama to birth and mate before they returned to the cool, nutrient-rich coast of Alaska. Just like the whales have their traditional migratory routes and seasons, yachts, too, have seasons and routes that we tend to favour for weather and currents. The route that lay before *Agápe*'s bow led us from coastal cruising out into open sea, crossing the world's largest ocean to the South Pacific.

Entering the famed waters of French Polynesia, we found ourselves enthralled by the rich and diverse marine life that lay just under our keel, but also sometimes petrified by the razor-sharp corals and sweeping currents that seemed to be a constant threat to our little floating home. Our first year in the South Pacific left us feeling exhausted as we learned the hard way about squalls, coral passes, and lagoon navigation. As we sailed into the benign north pass of Mo'orea in the Society Islands and dropped our anchor in the clear and protected water, we decided it was time to take a break from non-stop passagemaking. For the past three years, we'd averaged moving the boat every three to five days.

My wife, Rachel, and I still live aboard, but instead of moving our home every few days, we came to think of our Tayana 42 as more of a floating apartment. A very small apartment. We soon learned that the tropical island of Mo'orea is one of the premier whale watching locations in the world. A distinct population of humpback whales makes the arduous journey here every winter to birth their calves, mate, and rest in the warm waters before making the long migration back south to the feeding grounds of the Antarctic.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

Safely tucked into the lagoon, we'd sit in *Agápe*'s cockpit having our morning coffee and watch as the mothers led their calves along the outer reef, often stopping to sleep while their calves played at the surface.

Occasionally, we'd take our dinghy out to see them, but as one person had to stay in the boat with the engine running, it left the other alone in the water with the whales. The whales are not dangerous, but there are oceanic white tips that are known to sometimes follow the whales, and it's advised to always swim closely in a group, constantly checking your surroundings. For that reason, we opted to go on several guided tours.

In the US it is illegal to swim with whales or marine mammals of any kind, but in some countries, including French Polynesia, you can still immerse yourself in their world. There are restrictions in place for both your and the whale's safety, but here you have the opportunity to encounter them respectfully. ▶

Far left: A playful whale calf swims with Joshua Shankle – among his most memorable ocean experiences.
Left: *Agápe* under sail in the South Pacific.
Below: idyllic anchorage off a beach in Mo'orea

'These are some of our most memorable experiences'

Whale watching tours here are often done in panga-style fibreglass boats or large RIBs. Usually, there are 10-12 people per boat, including the guide, captain, and photographer. The chances of seeing and swimming with whales through a tour company are much better than going on your own, as the tour companies all communicate with each other and can travel at over 25 knots in the open ocean. And when you do see a whale, you don't have to worry about who will stay behind with the dinghy and miss the encounter.

I find myself morally on the fence about whale watching tours, or similar encounters like feeding sharks and stingrays. On one hand, I believe that limiting human interaction with nature is the best approach to reduce our impact, while on the other, I have seen first-hand how people who have never experienced something have no reason to strive to protect and steward it. Tours offer people a chance to connect with the animals in their natural habitat, leaving a lasting impression and hopefully conveying the importance of protecting our ocean and its inhabitants for years to come.

After spending five months in Mo'orea, we had completely fallen in love with the island. Slowing down long enough to make friends outside of the cruising community opened doors for us to see and experience things that few passersby will ever do.

We became good friends with several of the tour operators and guides, getting to know their views and opinions on the tour activities. We learned of their deep respect for the ocean and all it provides for them.

Living in harmony with the sea is firmly rooted in the Polynesian tradition and lifestyle. It only takes a moment of talking to our friend Maui, owner and operator of Corallina Tours, to realise his passion and love for all things aquatic. Running tours might be how he makes a living, but his passion is showing visitors his island and the magic that lies just below the surface.

This love and deep connection to the sea are what help make the tours in Mo'orea unique. Rachel and I have taken part in several whale watching tours around the island and, to date, these are some of our most memorable experiences in the ocean. Swimming with a whale is nothing short of magical and cannot be fully comprehended until you have experienced it.

Agápe has spent four years now exploring the alluring waters of Polynesia, and the feeling of excitement every time we spot a blow or breach has not diminished.

We enjoy all of our encounters with marine life whether above or below the water, but there is something special, an extra feeling of reward and accomplishment when you see such a large, sentient animal, and even more so when you see it from your own yacht. ■

Joshua Shankle and his wife Rachel spent six years working, dreaming and saving before setting off in 2016 aboard their Tayana Vancouver 42, *Agápe*. The couple have cruised central America, transited the Panama Canal and crossed the South Pacific. See on Instagram @bylandandsea

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Scorching hot! Close mark roundings for the J/121 *Whistler* and J/122 *Liquid* at St Maarten Heineken Regatta

Melges 24 flying the St Maarten colours

OPENING ACT

ST MAARTEN HEINEKEN REGATTA KICKS OFF THE CARIBBEAN INSHORE SEASON. DAVID HARDING MET TEAMS WHO'D MADE REMARKABLE VOYAGES TO TAKE PART

NexEnergy
WHISTLER

Photos: Laurens Morel/SMHR

The Caribbean regatta season is something of a pilgrimage to the sun, drawing competitors from across North America as well as across the Atlantic. Those coming from northern Europe or the Mediterranean often cross in the ARC rally or RORC Transatlantic Race. Then, after competing in your chosen events, and perhaps enjoying some cruising downtime in the islands, you have a choice of sailing or shipping the boat back for the European summer.

The St Maarten Heineken Regatta (SMHR) is the first big inshore regatta of the Caribbean season, after the offshore RORC Caribbean 600, and was the first time many new arrivals to the Caribbean this year had lined up against one another. Adopting the slogan 'serious fun', the event lays on competitive racing over four days, each ending with a seriously loud party.

FROM TWO TO FOUR

Given the timing and the geography, it's no surprise to find a fair few boats completing the RORC's Transatlantic Race before heading north to Antigua for the RORC Caribbean 600 and then enjoying a fast fetch across to St Maarten, 90-odd miles to the north-west, a week later.

One boat to compete in all three events in 2023 was Kate Cope's Jeanneau Sun Fast 3200, *Purple Mist*. Kate and her co-skipper, Claire Dresser, made headlines this year as the first two-handed female crew to complete the RORC Transatlantic. The boat is well known in racing circles in the UK, Cope being heavily involved in the double-handed offshore series. She started sailing relatively late in life, and moved from a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 36i to the 3200 in time for the AZAB in 2019.

After many more short-handed events around the UK over the following years, Cope sailed to Lanzarote in 2022 for the start of the RORC Transatlantic. Once across Biscay, she hopped around the Spanish coast in short legs by day, staying in shallow water in the hope of avoiding attack by orcas. *Purple Mist* succeeded in evading the whales, while other boats that ventured further offshore at the same time did attract the orcas' attention.

After an enjoyable double-handed Transatlantic and Caribbean 600, Cope and Dresser were joined by two more crew, Suzie Anthony and Claire's daughter, Emily, for the St Maarten Heineken – an event they entered 'just for fun'. Kate had never done any crewed around the cans racing, so even sailing four-up was a new experience – and a challenging one on a boat that's geared towards being sailed short-handed. In double-handed offshore racing each of the two crew is effectively sailing solo most of the time, while in St Maarten they were up against fully crewed J-Boats and a French Archambault which won five of six races to easily take the CSA 7 class win.

"I have never sailed fully crewed before," said Kate. 'In two-handed offshore events, whoever's at the helm is normally managing the mainsheet, traveller and backstay too – that's how the boat is set up. Inshore racing with a crew is a new experience and is definitely more pressured. I prefer sailing offshore!"

I joined *Purple Mist* for the 30-mile race around St Maarten on the breeziest day of the event, when conditions picked up from the usually consistent

'The event lays on competitive sailing'

THE OCEAN RACE

Above: full speed and full sun protection for HH42 *Ino XXX* crew. Left: four VO65s crossed the Atlantic to race in St Maarten after the opening stages of The Ocean Race Sprint Cup to Cape Verde, along with two VO70s

Above: the immaculate Shipman 63 *Fatjax* is raced hard despite being a liveabaord cruiser. Right: the usually double-handed *Purple Mist* team went fully crewed for the first time at St Maarten

14-17 knots from the east-north-east to 20-plus during the odd rain squall. Several of the VO65s and 70s came powering down to our leeward mark just as *Purple Mist* and a group of earlier starters were rounding, which certainly kept everyone on their toes for a minute or two.

ARC AND ONWARDS

Another British boat that had made the passage to St Maarten was *Fatjax*, a Shipman 63 owned and sailed by Iain and Jacqueline Kirkpatrick. *Fatjax* made their Atlantic crossing via the ARC rally, having previously completed an ARC in 2019 and sailed back to the UK for a refit in 2022 after their round the world plans were disrupted by pandemic lockdowns.

Entering the regatta was a last minute decision for Ian and Jacqueline. Having chosen to take a year out before rejoining the World ARC in 2024, they were cruising the West Indies and heading to St Maarten anyway when the urge took hold to do some racing. But the couple are experienced racers, and if the name *Fatjax* sounds familiar, there's good reason: Iain successfully campaigned two earlier boats of the same name (an X-332 and X-37), notching up multiple wins in Cowes Weeks.

Entering the St Maarten Heineken involved picking up some extra crew in Antigua and flying in a family friend at short notice from England. But the results made it worthwhile: *Fatjax* counted three 1sts to win her class convincingly against some doughty contenders such as ▶

David Harding

‘The event attracted over 100 boats from 25 nations’

Above: Rubicon’s Clipper 60 *Bluejay of Portsmouth* enjoying some three-sail reaching conditions. Below: Antiguan J/122 *Liquid* dominated its class

Rubicon’s Clipper 60 *Bluejay*. *Fatjax* was sailing with upwind sails only, the ageing asymmetric that came with the boat having given up in mid-Atlantic.

Fatjax was undoubtedly one of the most elegant boats in St Maarten, her condition reflecting the enormous amount of work that Iain put in to restoring her from a seriously neglected state after he and Jacqueline bought her in Palma in 2017.

Now, despite being a family cruising yacht and a home for extended periods, she’s still sailed with a seriously competitive edge when the occasion demands. As Jacqueline explained: “Iain still sails her like a dinghy. We don’t carry any excess weight when we’re racing and we empty the water tanks every day.”

Another boat to have made the pilgrimage south, though from the other side of the Atlantic, was the J/133 *Bella J*, owned by Raymond Rhinelander and based in Nova Scotia. Rhinelander’s decision to enter the Caribbean 600 was made only in September 2022, whereupon Raymond’s ‘boat co-ordinator’ and co-skipper, Sarah Nicholson, swung into gear. She sailed the boat down in November and December with a crew of four or five, picking weather windows and stopping in Virginia and the Bahamas before island-hopping down the Caribbean. They encountered some brisk conditions en-route, sailing in 38 knots under J4 and triple-reefed main, and recording a peak boat speed of 19.5 knots.

Their efforts were rewarded with two podium places in CSA 5, while the class win went to Pamela Baldwin’s Antiguan J/122 *Liquid*. The boats will likely rematch, as Antigua Sailing Week was next on *Bella J*’s agenda, followed by the Antigua-Bermuda race on the way home. Like several other boats making lengthy treks, *Bella J*’s crew arranged storage for their cruising kit in Antigua, where they underwent a mini refit.

SOUTHERN VISITORS

By far the longest-travelled entrant at St Maarten this year, which attracted over 100 boats from 25 nations, was Guy Chester from Australia on his 46ft Lock Crowther-designed trimaran, *Oceans Tribute*.

Chester bought the boat unseen while cruising the Caribbean several years ago in a 52ft Crowther catamaran and looking for something faster with three hulls. He took possession in New Zealand after sailing the cat back across the Pacific. Then he put *Oceans Tribute* through several stages of re-fit before heading via New Caledonia to his home town of Cairns. Next it was on to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Réunion and South Africa. Apart from the leg to New Caledonia, the trip was sailed single-handedly. Finally he sailed the 6,500 miles from Cape Town to Antigua, again on his own, in 27 days, clocking up a total of 16,500 miles since leaving New Zealand.

“Solo sailing in a racing trimaran wasn’t frivolous!” he commented. “The boat was well set up for offshore when I bought her, but I added much more for single-handing

across oceans. I have all the alarms and I still sleep with the mainsheet led to my hand down below."

His Caribbean regatta programme in 2023 had already included Barbados Sailing Week, the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in St Maarten and the RORC Caribbean 600 before arriving in St Maarten, with other events planned to include Les Voiles de St Barth, the BVI Spring Regatta and Antigua Sailing Week. Over the next couple of years Chester also intends to take part in the Rolex Middle Sea Race, Fastnet and the RORC Transatlantic.

"This year I'm doing most of the Caribbean events that include multihulls, but I haven't stopped sailing since 2019," he adds.

Multihull competition at St Maarten was tough and included Loïc Escoffier in the ORC 50 *Lodigroup*, in which he'd just won the Multi class in the Route de Rhum. Anthony McVeigh's British-registered Schionning 51C, *2 2 Tango*, took the overall win in St Maarten.

Despite being appreciably shorter, and older (built in 1991), *Oceans Tribute* had to give seven minutes an hour under the CSA (Caribbean Sailing Association) rating to the Schionning by virtue of being much lighter. Chester finished ahead on the water in every race but rarely managed to save his time.

"I'm still learning how to sail the boat [in racing conditions]," he explains, "though having amas that are only 40ft long limits my speed in a seaway."

He still took pleasure in clocking 17 knots upwind when the water was flat enough and crossing tacks with the VO65s and 70s, six of which made up CSA Class 1 with a mixture of fully-professional and pro-am crews. For the 65s it was a fill-in regatta between the European legs of their Sprint Cup as part of The Ocean Race, and as the biggest yachts in St Maarten they inevitably attracted much attention.

Above: fun racing in CSA6 for the First 35 *Cricket*. Right: Guy Chester's Lock Crowther Trimaran, *Oceans Tribute*, which he sailed solo to the Caribbean from New Zealand

David Harding

PROS AND AMS

The Beneteau First 53 *Yagiza*, sailed by an American race-charter team with a small full-time crew and Philippe Falle as boat captain, was another pro-am boat. *Yagiza* also completed the RORC Transatlantic and the Caribbean 600, with several other Caribbean events in the diary before shipping back to Europe.

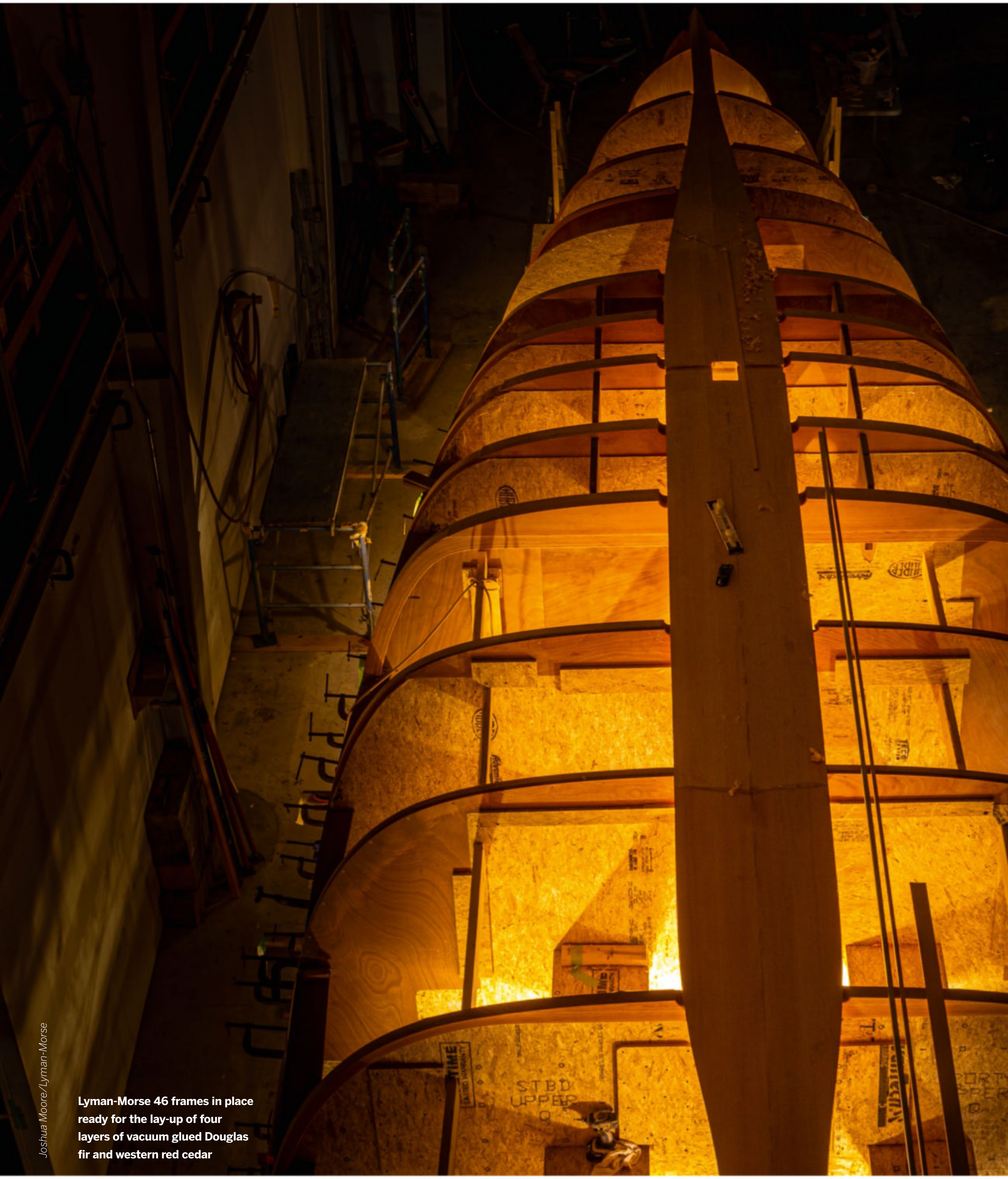
"A lot of owners prefer to ship their boats home because sailing back across the Atlantic does add wear and tear," observes Falle. "But shipping costs more than doubled after Covid. They're beginning to come back down, but shipping and the cost of living in general seem to have kept a few European boats away from the Caribbean this year."

He enjoys the racing in St Maarten, though points out that "courses with short legs are hard work because it takes us 10 minutes to pack the kite!"

Local boats also make up a good number of the entrants. One regular is the 36ft Dick Newick trimaran, *Tryst*, based in St Maarten for 50 years and rebuilt several times following hurricane damage. Sailed by Arthur Banting, she punched well above her weight in a class of much bigger boats to finish 2nd overall in Multihull 2. There was also a good fleet of local Melges 24s duking it out in CSA 3, with the Puerto Rican Melges 32 *Lazy Dog* adding to their trophy cabinet to take the class win.

A regatta has to offer something special to attract entrants from far and wide, including top international race boats, and still leave everyone smiling at the end of it. Everyone I spoke with in St Maarten voted the racing as among the best in the Caribbean, and particularly enjoyable for its varied courses around the coast. As for the parties – well, they're what St Maarten is famous for, helped along by the odd splash of rum and a can or three from the long-standing title sponsor. 'Serious fun' sums it up. For full results see **heinekenregatta.com** ■

Crew mascots, event village celebrations and live music – St Maarten Heineken Regatta prides itself on 'serious fun'

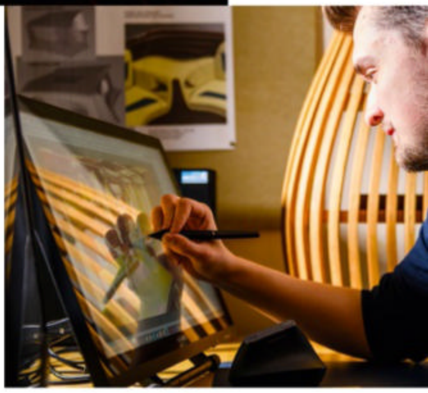


Lyman-Morse 46 frames in place ready for the lay-up of four layers of vacuum glued Douglas fir and western red cedar

Joshua Moore/Lyman-Morse

HIGH TECH WOOD

RUPERT HOLMES REPORTS ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN WOODEN CONSTRUCTION, AND WHY THIS ANCIENT MATERIAL IS BEING USED FOR HI-TECH CONTEMPORARY DESIGN



Spirit Yachts

Why would a naval architect and structural engineer used to working with cutting edge materials for America's Cup teams, including INEOS Britannia, and companies like Airbus, be excited about working with wood?

"It's quite simple for me," says French designer Thomas Tison, "Modernity does not neglect where we all come from – on the contrary it makes the best of it. In a way a boat is a heritage, so to ignore wood would be to ignore the essence of yacht design and building.

"Carbon fibre is only an evolution from this heritage and reinstating wood as a modern material increases the number of options a naval architect has for creation and performance."

Tison designed the stunning, contemporary 48ft offshore racer *Elida* which launched last year, and currently has a timber/epoxy 40ft high-end daysailer on the drawing board. To optimise *Elida*'s weight and stiffness Tison tested three different timber and glue laminates at an Airbus facility. "What we found was very interesting," he told me. "The existing data was 20 years old, but now we can ▶

Billy Black

Left: *Outlier* is a cold-molded custom 55-footer designed by Botin. Below left: new Lyman-Morse 46 performance cruiser

Paul Wyeth

Tyler Fields Photography/Lyman-Morse

Above: the beauty of wood inside a hand-crafted Spirit. Left: the Lyman-Morse 46 interior shows off its timber construction, with plenty of white painted surfaces for an airy feel

Alison Langley/Lyman-Morse

carefully select the glue and timber, so the figures for our laminates were stiffer than predicted, with the sitka spruce an order of magnitude better than expected."

Elida is built of diagonally planked sitka spruce covered with a 3mm mahogany veneer. Additional internal stiffening is provided by local layers of 200g carbon fibre. The result is a very stiff structure – projected forestay loads match those used on TP52s, yet the total weight of the 48ft hull shell is only 1,000kg.

Tison's next project is a very high end 40ft daysailer. Construction will be an evolution of *Elida*'s, giving a strong and stiff structure that meets Category A requirements, yet total displacement is only 3,700kg. He also has a concept under way for a 45m superyacht built in a similar manner.

TRADITIONAL SKILLSET

The enthusiasm naval architects young and old have for wood/epoxy composite construction is striking. Many of today's stand-out new designs on both sides of the Atlantic are built this way and it's often the best option for one off builds and short production runs. Key advantages include stunning aesthetics, stiff, lightweight structures and excellent longevity.

Today British yard Spirit Yachts is perhaps the most

‘Many of today’s stand-out new designs are built this way’

well-known specialist in this form of construction and their wood-as-art concept is well documented, including the sculptural approach taken with the Spirit 111 *Geist*.

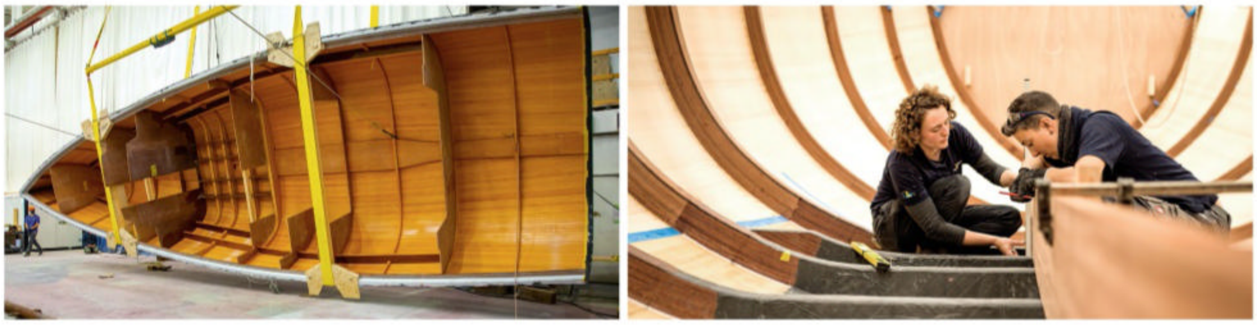
However, examples of other yachts abound, including Rob Humphreys’ Tempus 90 superyacht. This was built in Turkey, which unlike many countries never lost its wooden-boat building industry. As a result plenty of yards today are familiar with working with epoxy/timber composites. And many other top-notch recent wooden yachts have been built there, ranging right up to superyacht size, including Andre Hoek’s PC Yacht range and a number of his Truly Classic designs.

Britain has its own strong tradition of wooden-built designs: the Elephant Boatyard on the River Hamble has a long history of building, and maintaining, timber/epoxy yachts, including the Barracuda 45 built for Bob Fisher in the late 1980s. Wood was the medium successful IRC raceboat designer John Corby made his name with in the 1990s and 2000s. And it was the choice of one of the UK’s most successful yacht designers, Stephen Jones, for his own 46ft one-off *Meteor*, launched in 2006. She was built in Grimsby by Farrow and Chambers, which also built two cedar epoxy yachts for former *Yachting World* editor Andrew Bray.

On the other side of the Atlantic, several New England yards are active in building new custom and semi-custom yachts in wood/epoxy. Notable recent examples include the Lyman-Morse 46, Brooklin Boat Yard’s Jim Taylor-designed 44ft *Equipoise*, and the Botin custom 55-footer *Outlier*. A long list of other notable recent launches include *Anna*, a 65ft Stephens Waring design built by Lyman-Morse and launched in 2020.

BUILD TECHNIQUES

UK-based designer Rob Humphreys has a long association with this build method, having designed his first vessel in wood in the late 1970s, followed by a string ▶



Alison Langley/Lyman-Morse

Spirit Yachts

Left: Lyman-Morse 46 hull completed and being turned outside the boat shed. Right: hand-built expertise at the Spirit yard in Suffolk

Seb Olle

'The medium is often poorly misunderstood'

of others, from 22-footers to superyachts, over the following decades. Humphreys remains keen to design more: "The only thing that's holding us back really is an issue of market education," he told me.

The medium is often poorly understood, with few people realising the benefits and many assuming it has the same drawbacks as traditional timber construction, or that the technology hasn't moved on since cold-moulded wooden boats of the 1960s. These were built with resorcinol glues that were originally developed in the early 1940s, but required considerable clamping pressure to create a reliable bond and couldn't be used as a coating to protect timber.

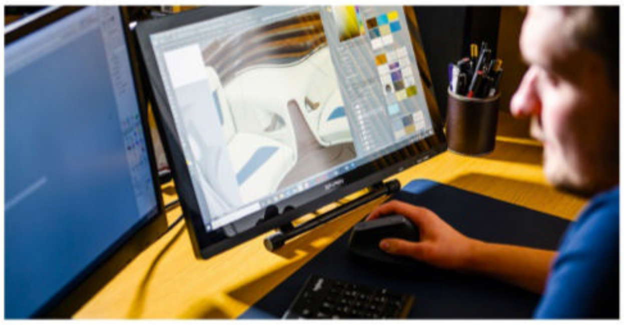
The epoxy revolution, driven enthusiastically by brothers Meade, Joel, and Jan Gougeon in Michigan in the early 1970s, marked a turning point for boatbuilding. "They got chemists to reconfigure epoxy to be runny enough to saturate the wood rather like a varnish," explains Stephen Jones.

Even though epoxy doesn't penetrate deep below the surface of timber, it sticks so well that, unlike paint and varnish, it forms a genuine barrier that keeps water out of the timber in the long term. As a result these boats have potential to last as long as any fibreglass structure.

There was another key advantage. "It could also be thickened as required for glueing and, most importantly, gap filling," adds Jones. This significantly speeds up the build process. These vessels are generally inherently stiffer and lighter than conventionally built fibreglass yachts and it was a preferred build method for performance yachts before cored composites became reliable.

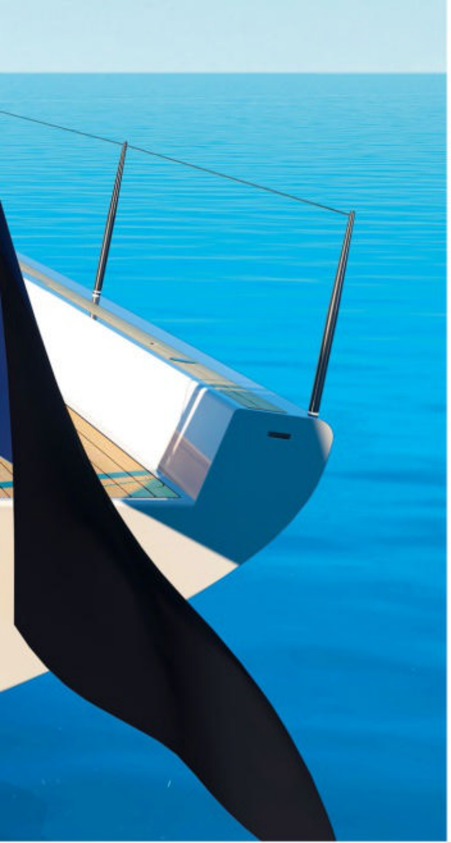
Meade Gougeon's 35ft trimaran *Adagio*, launched in 1970, was the first large all epoxy bonded and sealed wooden boat built without the use of mechanical fasteners (and is still sailing on the Great Lakes over 40 years on). Three years later the brothers built the Ron Holland-designed 41ft IOR Two Tonner *Golden Dazy*, ahead of a slew of further designs including a 60ft trimaran for Phil Weld's 1980 OSTAR single-handed transatlantic race, before race organisers imposed an upper size limit. Weld subsequently had the 50ft timber/epoxy tri *Moxie* built by

Spirit Yachts



Emeric Jezequel

Left: modern wooden builds created using latest CAD at Spirit Yachts. Right: carbon stiffening for *Elida*



Left: *L'Été* is a new 40ft daysailer design by Thomas Tison, while *Elida* (right) is a 48ft offshore racer/ cruiser launched last year

Jan Brugge

Right: organic shapes to echo the materials in *L'Été*. Far right: the spectacular Spirit 111 has a sculptural cockpit and interior

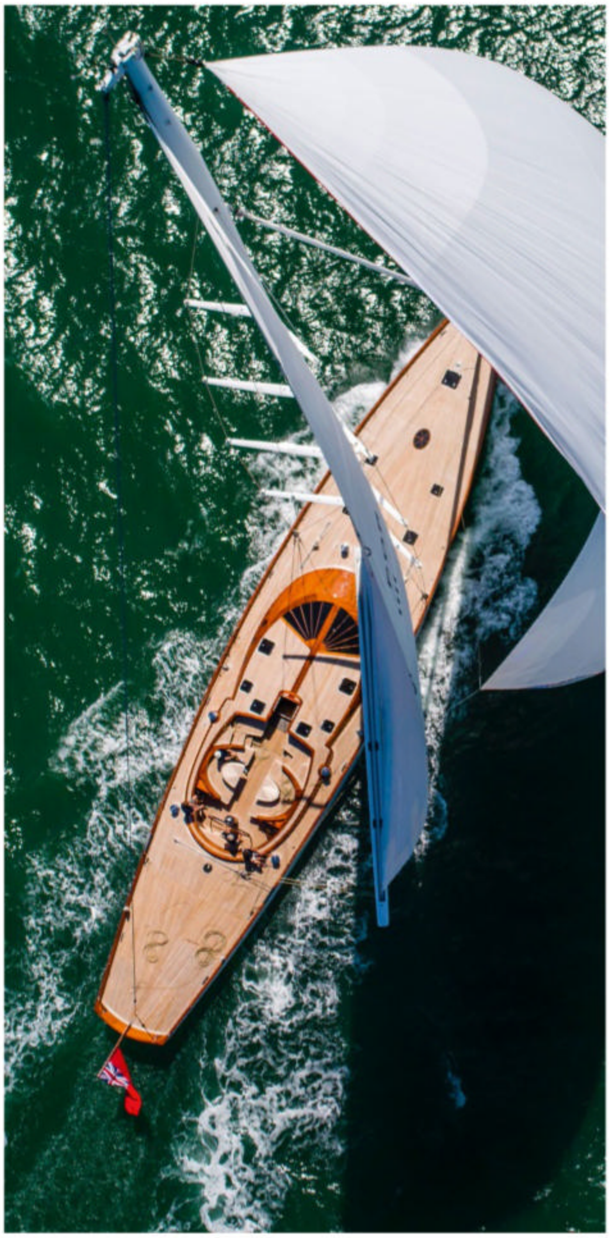
Thomas Tison Yacht Design

Walter Greene, in which he won the OSTAR.

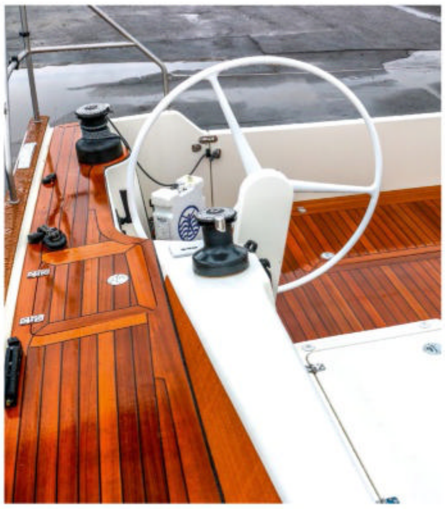
Over the years precise construction methods have varied, although all but a handful of boats are built with several layers of timber with the grain running in different directions to create a stiff structure. Some have a purely cold moulded construction, with larger boats often employing four or more layers laid at around 90° to each other. This creates a lightweight and stiff structure that can be protected from impact damage with epoxy and glass cloth. The Lyman-Morse 46, for instance, is built of four layers of vacuum glued Douglas fir and western red cedar.

Others start with a layer of narrow planks, termed strip planking. This had been a construction method long before the use of epoxy, but it became much more popular thanks to the development of the Speed Strip technique by Sunderland timber merchant Joseph Thompson & Co (now renamed NYTimber) with help from Farrow and Chambers. The planks have a loose tongue and groove profile, allowing them to neatly conform to the hull shape and giving space for thickened epoxy glue.

Speed Strip also eliminated the need for scarfs to be cut where planks are joined and reduced the number of mechanical fasteners needed. This reduced planking time by a quarter, and clean up and fairing time by 70%. An additional advantage, Jones says, is the "predominance of fore and aft timber strips/planks increases global hull stiffness – the ability of the hull to resist rig loads." ▶



Spirit Yachts



Lyman-Morse

Spirit Yachts

Above: cockpit detail of the Lyman-Morse 46. Right: wooden interiors can be dark – Spirit Yachts' distinctive fantail windows bring in more of the daylight

'There's a lot to like about this type of construction'

Around the same time Humphreys was also working on ways to reduce build times. The hull of his H22 sportsboat, which was available as a flat-pack kit with CNC cut components, could be assembled from scratch in a few hours by one person. I know of 40ft offshore racing yachts that were planked up in a week.

Strip planked boats can be built over laminated frames that become part of the final structure, and don't require a mould that is subsequently discarded. These frames are surprisingly quick and easy to create – at Spirit Yachts, for instance, they're assembled on full-size print outs of the boat's plans laid over a plywood floor. This allows each piece of timber to be bent by hand into exactly the right shape and held in place using spikes driven into the floor. They're then clamped together in situ while the epoxy cures.

Originally cedar was used for Speed Strip planks as it's lightweight yet very resistant to rot, although other species with similar properties, including Douglas fir and sitka spruce, are also suitable. Typically two thinner outer layers of double-diagonal planking are added outside the strip planking. In the case of *Zest*, our 36ft Rob Humphreys design built by Farrow and Chambers in 1992, this forms a 20mm-thick tri-axial construction with the grain of the timber oriented in three different directions. Larger yachts may have four or more layers outside the strip planking and a few boats have an additional transverse skin to help strengthen the area around the keel.

IMPACT PROTECTION

In all cases the whole lot is glued together and sealed from water ingress with epoxy. Therefore no more maintenance is needed than for a fibreglass hull and it will never succumb to osmosis.

Jim Taylor, designer of the 44ft *Equipoise* and 50ft *Rascal*, both recently built by Brooklin Boat Yard in Maine, says that in North America this construction is likely to be referred to as cold moulded, with the term referring to the outer layers, rather than the inner skin of strip planks.

Equipoise was built with a first layer of fore-and-aft tongue and groove larch planking which is epoxy bonded to the laminated keel, keel floors, bulkheads and ring frames. Outside of that two layers of diagonal 3/16in (5mm) paulonia were vacuum bagged at +/-45° to the initial planking. Then a further layer of tongue and groove larch was laminated over the paulonia, again in a fore and aft orientation. Outside that is a protective layer of epoxy/glass. Displacement is little more than six tonnes, despite an unusually large 44% ballast ratio, allowing a large rig without the drawbacks of excessive draught.

"There is a whole lot to like about this type of construction," Taylor says. "The approach is cost effective and the result is extremely attractive on many levels. The boats are light, strong, tough, quiet and well insulated thermally. A bright finished inside skin can be integrated into an especially elegant interior, the construction materials are environmentally sustainable, and there's not a lot of waste. They're not as light as carbon skins over lightweight core, but they are much more liveable and not nearly as fragile or as expensive."

The outer glass/epoxy sheathing can vary from light cloth for impact protection, through to heavier laminates that add structural strength in high load areas such as around the keel. A few boats have glass only outside, rather than additional layers of timber, but these heavier laminates need more work and filler to create a fair surface.

Of course, if the outer sheathing is punctured, then it will need to be repaired quickly, but a quick application ▶

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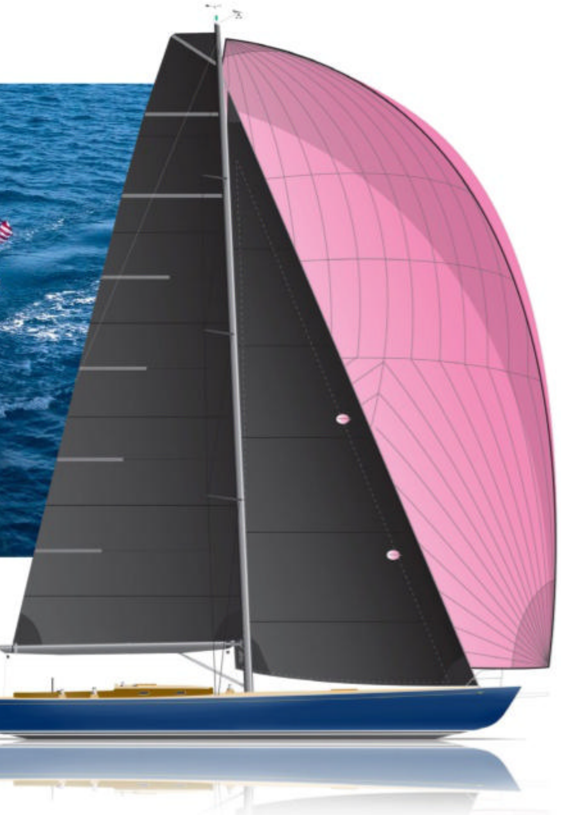

Above: *Kazumi*, the first PC47 from Performance Classic Yachts, features a carbon grid system for strength and light weight. Right: a new line of Stephen Jones/Jonty Sherwill modern classics to be built at the Elephant Boatyard in Hamble, UK

‘It reduces the carbon footprint of building each boat’

of epoxy filler is all that’s needed until a neat long-term repair can be made.

Developments and refinements over time include vacuum bagging the various layers of timber together, along with the external protective layers of glass cloth. At the high end carbon reinforcement is increasingly used strategically to add further stiffness where necessary, without a significant weight penalty.

Elida’s varnished topsides look stunning, while those of the 1987 Humphreys-designed *Apriori* and 1988-built *Old Mother Gun* of 1988 still look great. There’s therefore a huge temptation for anyone building a wooden yacht to opt for similar finishes. However, it’s important to note in these cases the epoxy needs a more traditional varnish for UV protection and that can require a lot of maintenance. On the other hand, today’s polyurethane paints can last up to a decade in dark colours and *Meteor*’s original white paint from 2006 still looks almost new.

MODERN LOOK

On the other hand, varnished bright work on deck and coachroof sides are subject to less wear and tear than topsides. Jones says these are easy to prep for varnishing if designed with simple surfaces without fiddly detail. The cleaner style of modern classic deck structures also reduces water retention, so surfaces dry quickly. “It can still look the part but becomes less onerous to keep,” says Jones.

Below decks it’s easy to fall into a trap of showing off so much natural timber that the interior becomes dark; a strategic mix of white painted panels and clear timber finishes gives a much brighter result. The Spirit 72, for instance, has satin painted panels and a carefully planned LED lighting system to enhance the warmth of the natural timber.

Hull windows are possible and, even if maintaining a classic external appearance is a priority, it’s possible to allow a lot of light in from the deck. Spirit Yachts’ trademark fantail window is an excellent example of this.

Alternatively, interiors can be absolutely contemporary in style, as seen in RM Yachts’ 29-43ft range of plywood/epoxy performance cruisers. Plywood also offers excellent stiffness in relation to weight and is an ideal medium for today’s chined hull shapes. At RM all the pieces for an entire boat are delivered on pallets, ready for immediate assembly. Hulls are built over frames of substantial chipboard set up on jigs. Assembling a hull is therefore a straightforward process that doesn’t require a full mould.

The Ace 30 scow bow short-handed IRC raceboat also employs plywood/epoxy construction. It’s an approach the builder says considerably reduces the carbon footprint of building each boat.

Matt Newland of Swallow Yachts tells me their Whisper 300 retro-style planing motor cruiser has demonstrated that at sizes above 30ft an epoxy/timber construction can compete directly on labour hours with conventional fibreglass boatbuilding. The company’s next model, the Bay Cruiser 32, will be a traditionally styled, but very lightweight and quick, 32ft trailerable weekender made of clinker-style plywood and epoxy.

Other forthcoming projects include a range of 45-70ft modern classics by Stephen Jones and illustrator/designer Jonty Sherwill that will be built by the Elephant Boatyard.

These boats will also be more sustainable than their contemporaries built using conventional glass fibre or more advanced composites. The quantity of epoxy used for the build is small and bio-sourced resins can be used without the requirement for a full size mould. The result is that the carbon footprint associated with building the Ace 30, for instance is 1.9 tonnes, but would be more than three times that value for a boat of conventional construction, even before accounting for building the moulds. ■

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A BIRD IN HAND

YOUNG BRETON SAILOR GUIREC SOUDÉE AND HIS FAMOUS RED HEN, MONIQUE, RIDE OUT CHRISTMAS ICE-BOUND IN GREENLAND

Say what you will, but the French have got style. We Anglo-Saxons may fancy ourselves as adventurers, but then along comes an unsponsored lad from North Brittany in a 30ft steel boat and trumps us all. Not only is his voyage more than notable in its own right, his choice of shipmate is unique. Very few single-handers take pets along for the ride. Examples like Pete Crowther who shipped out with his cat on the longest-ever passage in the single-handed Atlantic races are rare, but Guirec Soudée decided to sign on his favourite chicken. A little red hen called Monique accompanied him to the Caribbean, wintered in Northwest Greenland, sailed on through the Northwest Passage, down to Antarctica and home again to Brittany, rewarding him with an egg a day whenever she could manage it.

Guirec was just 18 when he slipped his lines. His humility, humour and youthful love for the world around him shines through every page of his inspiring book, *A Sailor, a Chicken, an Incredible Voyage*. We are lucky enough to join him and Monique aboard *Yvinec* over Christmas and the New Year far up the coast of Northwest Greenland. Things are not going smoothly...

VOYAGE D'YVINEC

Photos: Guirec Soudée

Monique stretches her legs while *Yvinec* is surrounded by ice

* * *

“Sometimes, I worry I'm going mad. I'm talking to a chicken, grooming my facial hair with a fork and I could do with a really good meal.

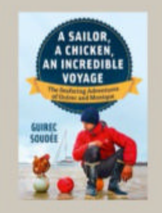
It must be a little after eleven in the morning when I see it. Heading out on deck, I can suddenly sense something moving really close to the boat. Maybe it's just a chunk of ice. Maybe I'm hallucinating. I keep my eyes trained on the same spot, and again, there's a ripple in the water. There it is, a seal! With the cutest little round head and whiskers. Instinctively, I think 'meat' and 'dinner' and duck down into the cabin to fetch my rifle.

When I come back out, the seal is still there. Just as it pokes its head out of the water, I tuck the butt of the rifle into the crook of my shoulder and take aim.

I'm about to pull the trigger. The seal isn't moving a muscle. It's just looking at me, not a hint of fear in its eyes. Its handsome face is right in my sights.

I lower the rifle. I can't seem to think straight. I pull myself together, tuck the rifle into my shoulder again, and take aim. If I land this seal, I'll have enough meat for the next two months. But still the seal doesn't move. It could dive and swim away, but it doesn't. It just looks at me with puppy-dog eyes, and says, 'Come on, you're not going to do that to me, are you?'

INTRODUCED BY
TOM CUNLIFFE



A Sailor, A Chicken, An Incredible Voyage by Guirec Soudée, Greystone Books, £18.99

It really spoke to me, I swear.

I can't bring myself to pull the trigger. I'd never forgive myself. This is the seal's home. I'm the stranger here, intruding on its territory. I don't have the right to do this. Or the heart.

I let the seal swim off and put away my rifle. I'm really going to have to up my fishing game.

The pack ice only ends up holding for two days. The next night, the wind blows hard. Some of the gusts clock in at 35, even 40 knots. From my berth, I can feel the boat shifting. The ice is damping the movement. It feels like we're stuck in mud.

The swell has started to form, and it's rolling beneath the thin crust of sea ice. The ice is starting to crack into big pieces. The motion of the waves is pitching the pieces up and down, and they're gaining momentum in the troughs between the peaks.

The ice isn't very thick, so it won't do much damage when it hits the boat, but if a growler or a small iceberg were to hit the hull with the same force, it would be a serious problem. What am I supposed to do? There's still too much ice for me to raise anchor.

By the morning of day three, the wind has dropped a little. In the light of dawn, I climb up to the first spreader. The view from up there is incredible. The entire expanse of sea ice has cracked apart. It looks like a giant jigsaw puzzle. ▶

CHRISTMAS EVE

The wind has started to blow again, and the pieces of the puzzle are jiggling around, bumping into one another like bumper cars at the fairground.

These are hefty slabs of ice, nothing like the thin plates I saw the other day. They are as hard as rock. Things weren't good before, but now the bay is a living hell. And *Yvinec*, Monique, and I are caught in the middle of it all. We could find ourselves crushed at any time. The anchor chains are encased in ice and can't hold the weight of the boat anymore, not now that it's ballasted with all the chunks of pack ice stuck to the hull. We're drifting toward the shore. I can hear the chain groaning. I can feel the anchors slipping. The boat is definitely moving.

Outside, the visibility is zero. The wind is howling a solid 30 knots, and it's blowing all the snow off the summits and sending it swirling around in squalls.

Powerless, all I can do is glue my eyes to the depth-sounder and try to estimate how far away we are from the shallows. The needle is starting to go down, first from 65ft to 60ft, then 50, and on it goes, until it reads 12ft. It won't be long before we run aground.

> **'Everything is shaking. Books are falling from the shelves'**

It's time for me to put on my drysuit and grab my dry bags. In one of them is my survival kit, with the tent and freeze-dried food. I've filled the other with everything else I'm going to need: sleeping bag, camp stove, clothing, rice for me, grain for Monique, and headlamp, among other things. Then I sit down on the edge of my berth with the bags at my feet, hold Monique in my lap, and wait.

And there you have it: we've run aground. But we're not leaving the boat, not yet.

We're still in the ice, and there's no water around us, so we're not sinking. That's the golden rule in the Navy: as long as you're still afloat, you don't abandon ship. We're lucky our sailboat has a steel hull. If it were made of plastic, we'd have sunk by now. Months later, the local fishermen are going to find a sailor and a chicken frozen to death.

Dark thoughts are the last thing you need when you're up shit creek. If you start to lose hope, that's when you're completely screwed. Success is dependent on attitude. You have to stay positive. Right now, the plan has to be to somehow get back afloat and get the hell out of here.

Holed up warm and cozy inside the cabin, Monique and I can hear the wind whistling outside. The boat heels to the side, then rights herself before heeling over once more. Everything is shaking. Books are falling from the shelves and dishes are rattling in the sink.

Through the cabin windows, we see vast sheets of water and ice crashing over us. It's terrifying. The sound is deafening. It pains me to think what this is doing to the boat. I'm sure everything must be getting completely trashed.

In my lap, Monique isn't moving a muscle. She looks up at me, and I can tell she's worried too. She knows something isn't quite right. I give her feathers a gentle rub and tell her that everything is going to be alright, that we're going to be just fine.

By reassuring her, I'm reassuring myself too. Oh, poor Momo, what have I roped you into? She'll never survive if we have to abandon ship.

We aren't completely out of luck, though. I get the sense we've managed to avoid the rocks, and we're resting on the sand. The next morning, that best-case scenario is confirmed. The wind has turned, and now, thanks to the high tide, we're afloat again. I fire up the engine and we motor away to cast anchor again in a good 60ft of water. That night, when I'm lying snug and cozy in my bunk, I look out through the cabin window and smile up at the stars.

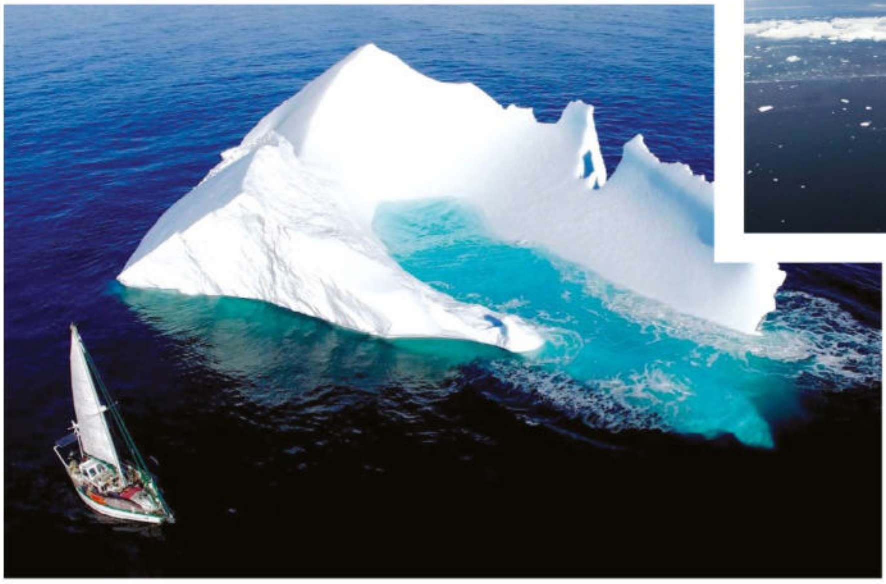
That's how Monique and I ring in our second Christmas together. Last year we were celebrating in St Barts, and I was out on deck in boardshorts watching the spectacular fireworks. Today, we have nothing fancy to celebrate with. One of us is chowing down on his rice, and the other is pecking at her grain.

It's 0600 in the morning on New Year's Eve and *Yvinec* is heeled over about 40° on her port side. The depth-sounder

Soudée's steel-hulled 30ft yacht amid Northwest Greenland scenery that's spectacular for both man and chicken

Photos: Guirec Soudée

Left: seen from a drone, the tiny speck of *Yvinec* under sail is dwarfed by icebergs



Above: icebergs large and small are an ever present threat when sailing at high latitudes.
Right: sailing with a chicken is not as daft as it seems – the hen often produced fresh eggs

is telling me we're in 45ft of water, but still we've run aground. We must have drifted free from the shore overnight, only to hit a sandbar. The wind is blowing 30 knots, the water temperature is a frigid 30° Fahrenheit, and the air temperature is -22°. With the wind chill, it feels closer to -40°.

I'm powerless. All I can do is try to stay calm. Our fate lies in the hands of Mother Nature. We can only count on the wind, the tide, and the current to get us out of here. There's a lot riding on the strength of the boat too. Once again, I have the survival kit at the ready. I'm not sure we'll be quite so lucky a second time. Unless there are greater forces at work. I'm not usually a believer, but if the situation calls for it...

NEW YEAR, NEW ICE

Out on deck, I can see big, fat snowflakes falling through the beam of my flashlight. It's so cold, I can't feel the tips of my fingers at the end of my gloves. We're beached about 60ft from the shore. And there's a nasty-looking growler sitting barely 6ft away. Maybe I can give it a push. First with one foot, then the other, I step out gingerly onto a slab of ice beside the boat. It seems solid enough to me. Hanging on to the edge of the boat, I inch my way around the boat, camera in hand.

Suddenly, the slab of ice I'm standing on breaks loose and starts to drift away. I only just manage to scramble back aboard in time. What a stupid thing for me to do. I really can't afford to take risks like that. Seriously, in these temperatures, if I fell into the water without my drysuit, I don't think I'd last very long.

It's New Year's Eve, and for 35 days, I've been holed up in this damn bay with nothing to do but suffer my way through one ordeal after the other.

I came out here to live a dream, and it's turned out to be a nightmare. I'm willing to make whatever sacrifices and end up losing 40lb if I must, but I don't want to lose my boat. My whole life is on this boat. This boat is the reason why I busted my ass halfway across the world and left my life at home behind when I was 18 years old. I have this boat to thank for bringing Monique into my life. So please, whatever happens, don't let my boat go down.

NORTHWEST PASSAGE
2016

I think about my father. I've never been afraid of death and I'm definitely not worried about it now that I know I won't be alone up there when my time comes. I'm not in any kind of hurry. I love life, and there are still lots of things I want to do and plenty of adventures I want to experience.

To pass the time, I decide to tidy up the cabin. When I come across some brightly coloured paper garlands from St Barts, I slip one of them over my head and another around Monique's neck, then I turn on the video camera and pretend that everything is okay. 'Happy New Year, my sweet Momo!'

I've had a terrible night, constantly waking to the sounds of the boat bumping aground. Between nightmares and keeping watch, I've lost count of how many times I thought the hull had caved in under the relentless attacks from the swell. I might have worried *Yvinec* was a bit of a rust bucket, but she's turning out to be a tough one who can really hold her own.

This morning, the tide has come in, the wind has dropped, and my berth is quietly swaying. The boat isn't listing to the side the way it was last night, and I can feel a slight rocking movement. It sure looks as if *Yvinec* has righted herself.

I tug a hat over my ears before I head out on deck. A good amount of the ice has given way to open water. The tide is high, and the wind has set us free.

It's a miracle. I can pull up the anchor. And just like that, gently we glide away in the light of the Arctic dawn.

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OYSTER

PRINCESS

Sunseeker

RUPERT HOLMES

Where: Port Ginesta, Spain, mid October
Conditions: 5-15 knots wind
Model: main options include taller aluminium performance rig, upgraded OneSails sail package, full Flexiteek deck, air conditioning

Barbar Studio

ELAN E6

CAN A PERFORMANCE CRUISER OFFER SPACE AND COMFORT WITHOUT THE COMPROMISES OF A BOAT GEARED SOLELY FOR SPEED?

I've always looked forward to testing new models in Elan's performance range. Historically they've offered an enticing blend of performance and comfort, with every example I've sailed in the last decade providing a reassuringly solid ride even at planing speeds. Like earlier models, the 47ft E6 is a product of Humphreys Yacht Design's 60/60 racing/cruising concept, with the idea being they offer more than half of each world.

Hull sections aft have a marked flare above a ▶

elan E6
elan

‘Helm positions are excellent, with good visibility’

relatively narrow waterline, with a high chine aft of midships that digs in at 7-8° of heel, when it gives a large boost to form stability. At the same time, wetted surface area is minimised when the boat is fairly upright, promoting good light airs performance, as we found later.

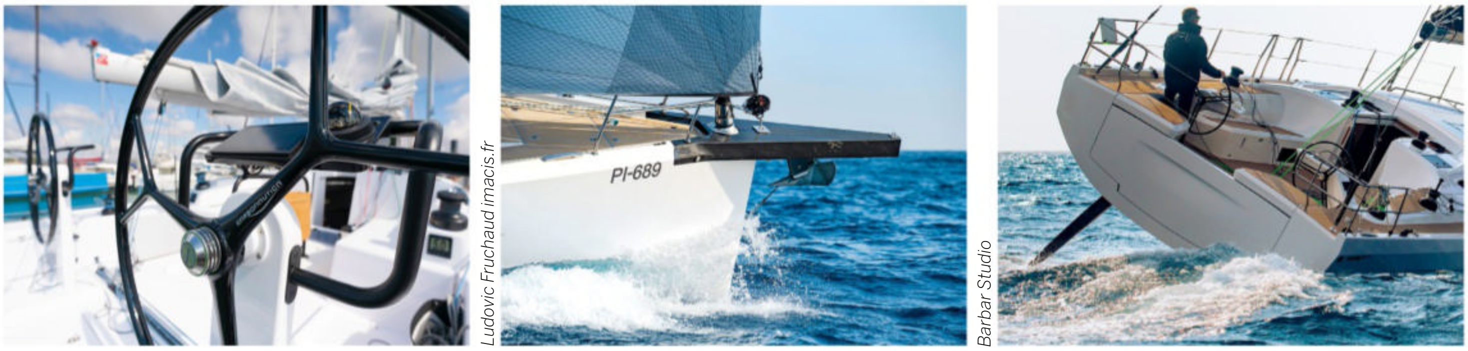
On my first sail a short Mediterranean chop, with waves reflected off the shore, created an awkward sea state that slowed progress upwind. Nevertheless we made 6.7 to 6.8 knots close-hauled in 12-13 knots of true breeze at true wind angles generally between 45-50°.

Helm positions are excellent, with good visibility, big secure folding foot chocks and a comfortable seat either on the side deck or optional aft benches. The steering felt precise throughout the range of conditions we experienced, even though there was some friction due to the pilot setup on the test boat.

Bearing away onto a true beam reach, with the apparent therefore still well forward, we accelerated to 7.8-8.0 knots, sailing effortlessly under main and jib only. Sadly we didn’t get enough breeze to experience the boat’s planing performance at more downwind angles. Design calculations show a standard spec boat should lift onto the plane in roughly 17-22 knots of true wind. However, our test boat was heavier than standard thanks to a wide range of options including full Flexiteek decks, air conditioning, the helm seat boxes which house an outdoor fridge and barbecue, extra tankage and so on.

PERFORMANCE RIG

It was equipped with a taller performance aluminium rig and upgraded sail inventory from OneSails, plus a 2.8m draught torpedo keel. Other configurations offered include a tall carbon spar, which also has lighter furniture and a deeper, lighter keel with 2.85m draught. This reduces overall displacement, without compromising righting moment, and is therefore an appealing configuration for those keen to get planing at the earliest opportunity. A shallower 2.4m draught keel is also offered.



Ludovic Fruchaud imacis.fr

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From left: helm positions are excellent, with secure folding foot chocks; carbon sprit incorporates anchor handling; generous twin rudders provide plenty of grip

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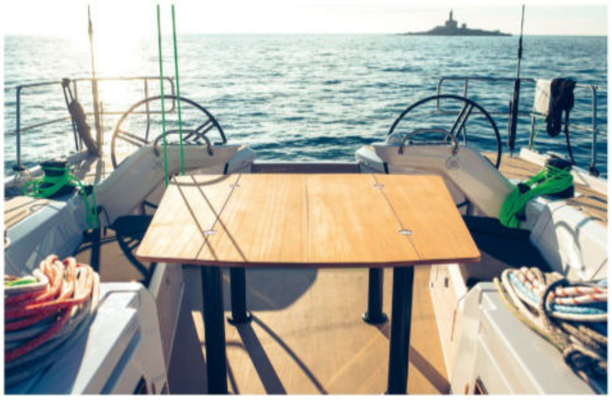
Hull shape has low wetted surface to boost light airs speed, but stability builds quickly at modest heel angles.
Right: three different rigs are offered



Barbar Studio

Optional twin removable tables on neat carbon fibre legs that screw into sockets in the cockpit sole

The twin rudders provided plenty of grip, even with the boat pressed, although the stern wave on the lee quarter is noisy when the boat is well-heeled and fully powered up. With its taller rig our test boat needed reefing earlier than the standard version. Sailing upwind in true wind speeds of 14-15 knots, we were marginally overpowered with full sail, so dropped the first reef in. This is easily done thanks to Seldén's single-line reefing system, but with only one electric winch fitted it required more physical effort than most new yachts of this size.

For my second day we had lighter airs of predominantly 9-10 knots, with occasional stronger puffs, and a slight leftover swell. Even in this breeze we were well powered up sailing to windward, making 6.5 knots at true wind angles around 50°.

Genoa sheet tracks are on the side decks, which makes for relatively wide sheeting angles that preclude very tight pointing, but this reflects the realities of cruising where sails are often trimmed with a lot of twist to give a wide and forgiving groove.

Off the wind our speeds and angles were hampered by the lack of an asymmetric spinnaker cut for downwind sailing. However, even with the Code 0 we made mostly 7.5-8 knots at true wind angles around 125-130° – respectable figures for the top end of a Force 3.

Elan has chosen a traditional approach for the cockpit layout, with a pit area at the companionway where halyards and reefing lines are handled. There's a recessed traveller on the cockpit floor for the German mainsheet, which is controlled by winches just ahead of the wheels. Primary winches for headsail sheets are also positioned outboard of the cockpit benches.

OLYMPIC EXPERIENCE

The precise layout was determined after testing with an Olympic sailing team on a full scale model. It's ideal for crew that want to be involved with the sailing, rather than sitting remote from the action and letting others do the work, and will also work well for fully-crewed racing. On the other hand, it's not an ideal layout for a sole watch keeper, as a lot of moving around is needed between mainsheet, halyards, headsail sheets and other controls.

As standard, a through-deck headsail furler is fitted, but there's no option for a self-tacking jib, on the basis that the design is aimed at experienced and enthusiastic sailors. The Harken split track for the mainsail luff cars brings the head of the sail lower when it's dropped, making handling easier.

Surprisingly, in windier conditions there was not ▶

Ludovic Fruchaud imacis.fr

Left: classic, spacious saloon layout around a substantial table. Below: recessed hull portlights are a Pininfarina styling touch but serve a practical purpose as fenders don't press hard against the windows

Barbar Studio

enough purchase for the traveller car, or the towable headsail sheet cars. On the plus side, there are good rope boxes aft of the mainsheet winches and under the helm seat and the clean side decks have deep bulwarks.

My final sail was in even lighter breezes with only 6.5-8 knots of true wind, though we still managed speeds within a knot of the true wind speed when reaching with the Code 0. Even upwind in these conditions we made respectable progress, including just over 5 knots of boat speed at an apparent wind angle of 32° (TWA 55-60°) in 6 knots of breeze.

The cockpit is deep and wide, with plenty of space to move around, although there are limited options for bracing your feet with the boat well heeled. This is particularly true for boats with the optional twin removable cockpit tables.

The split, two-part bimini allows for the mainsheet traveller and has an in infill section for use in harbour or at anchor. There's also provision for neatly stowing a sprayhood. The standard inventory lacks a bathing platform, but options are for either a small fold-up platform, or the larger version fitted to the test boat that comes approximately 18in above the cockpit sole and therefore offers an additional feeling of security when at sea.

ITALIAN STYLING

The saloon is impressively large, with a substantial folding table and a roughly 50/50 balance of white surfaces and woodwork. However, by today's standards it's not particularly bright as coachroof and hull windows are slender. The port side settee also has Elan's usual small fold-out chart table that can be used facing either forward or aft, though in use it prevents the settee being used as a sea berth.

The L-shape galley at the foot of the companionway includes plenty of worktop space, a top and front loading fridge. Pininfarina, which was responsible for both external and interior styling, clearly worked its magic here. The inboard worktop with sink, for instance, tapers towards the boat's centre line, creating more visual interest while simultaneously increasing floor space near the companionway. However, fiddles are disappointingly low and may not keep items in place when the boat is well-heeled in a lively sea state.

Peninsula bed in the owners' forward cabin

Barbar Studio

The forward owner's cabin in three cabin versions has a big floor area and large peninsula bed. Stowage is in a large hanging locker with shelves, plus two additional eye-level lockers and further extensive shelving for small items around the bed. There's useful volume under the bunk, although this is less easy to access and also houses tankage and batteries for the windlass and bow thruster. The very large en-suite has folding screens that create a separate shower area – a neat idea for a head that doesn't need to be used at sea. The aft heads is also a very good size, yet narrow enough to brace yourself in place at sea, and has a good-sized separate shower stall.

Aft cabins have large berths and good stowage, although natural light and ventilation is restricted. There's also a four cabin option with a Pullman-style bunk cabin forward of the main bulkhead, a small shared heads opposite and a smaller forward cabin.

A technical space in the tunnel between the aft cabins houses optional systems including air con, diesel generator and watermaker. The Simarine digital switching panel was originally developed as a project for Elan and has manual override switches with automotive style fuses. This provides the advantages of a useful technology without sacrificing manual operation as a back up.

Barbar Studio

The hull moulding is vacuum infused, as are the inner structure, stringers and supports. Infused composite bulkheads also help to eliminate weight, while owners will have the reassurance of structural engineering by Gurit.

The steering is set up with a twin wire system from each wheel so even if one breaks the other wheel will still work and there's therefore no requirement for an emergency tiller. Standard tankage is ample for normal use, but those planning more extended cruising may find it limiting.

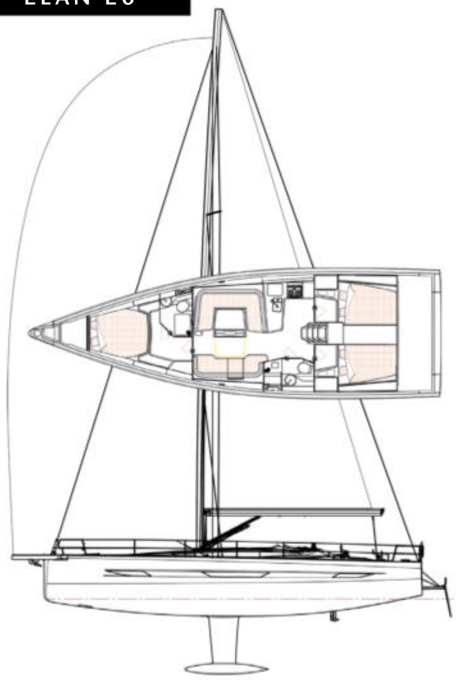
OUR VERDICT

Elan is a master of this sector of the market, maintaining a presence even after other manufacturers abandoned it, so this is a vitally important model for the yard. Despite an unladen displacement of 11,250kg, and the weight of the options on the test boat, it proved rewarding to sail and responsive even in lighter airs, while in more breeze the promise of planing performance has potential to create plenty of big grins. It also boasts ample cruising comforts both below deck and in the cockpit, especially when the deck boxes that house an outdoor galley are specified.

It makes sense to offer deep keels to reduce displacement without compromising righting moment. While this may not be particularly restrictive in many parts of the Mediterranean, on the downside there are plenty of other sailing areas where a draught of almost 3m can be problematic and where even the shoal draught option of 2.4m won't suit everyone.

The yard has clearly invested heavily in both the development and build of this model. The result is a good looking yacht that should have wide appeal. ■

ELAN E6



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA 15.30m 50ft 2in • **Hull length** 14.10m 46ft 3in • **LWL** 13.68m 44ft 11in • **Beam** 4.49m 14ft 9in • **Draught** (std) 2.80m 9ft 2in • **Draught** (option) 2.40m or 2.95m 7ft 10in or 9ft 8in • **Displacement** (light) 11,250kg 24,802lb • **Ballast** 3,267kg 7,202lb • **Sail area** (100% foretriangle) 120.4m^2 1,296ft^2 • **Water** 370lt 81.5gal • **Fuel** 240lt 53gal • **Engine** Yanmar 57hp or 80hp • **Electric options** 1x15kW or twin 10kW Oceanvolt electric drives • **Sail area/displacement ratio** 24.4 • **Displacement/LWL ratio** 122 • **Design** Humphreys Yacht Design/Pininfarina • **Base price ex VAT** €464,900; Price as tested approx €700,000. **elan-yachts.com**

ALSO CONSIDER

BENETEAU FIRST 44
A little shorter and narrower, yet still a benchmark for a quick, comfortable yacht in this size range. Price: €335,000 ex VAT.
beneteau.com

Gilles Martin-Raget

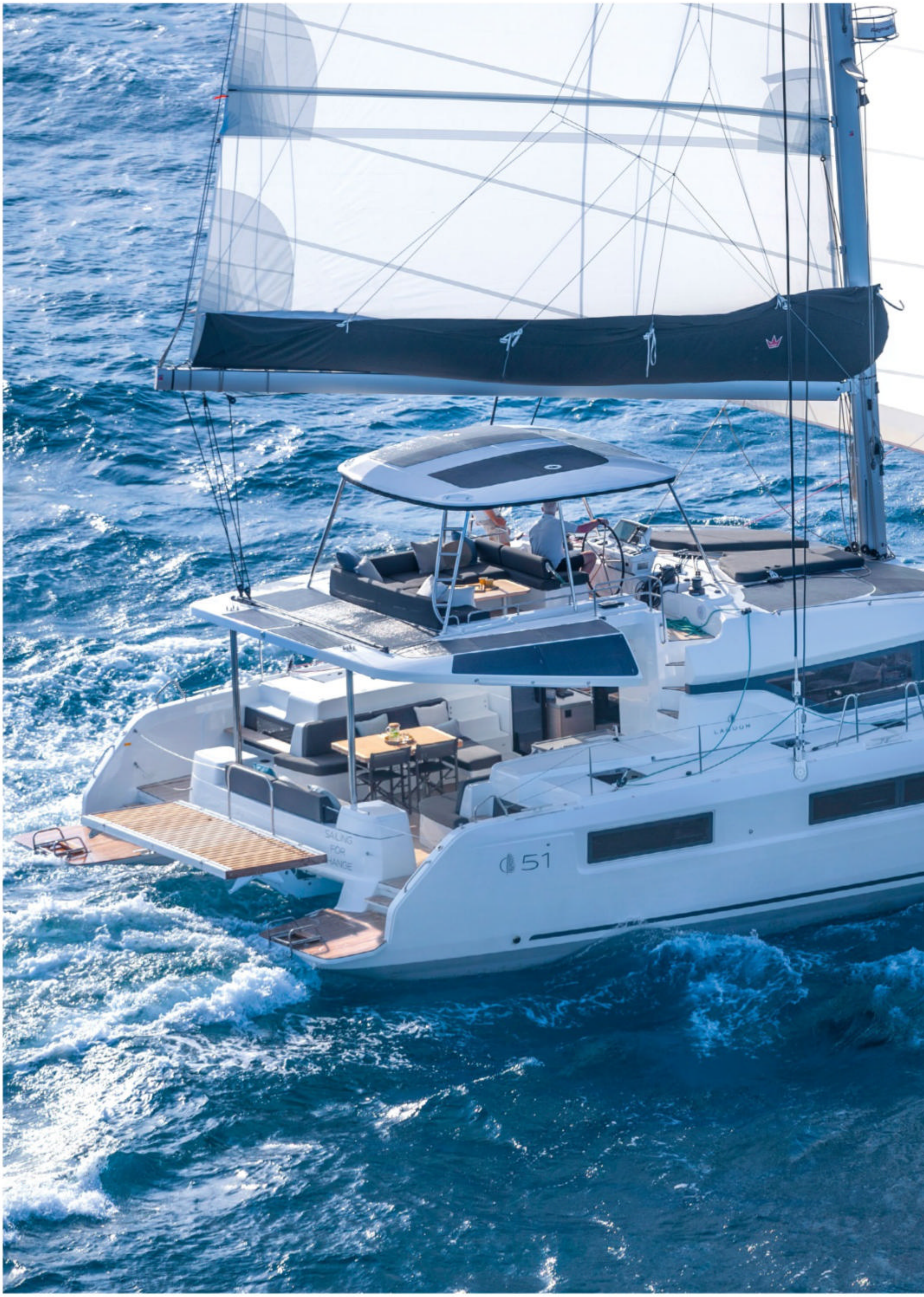
J/45
Fast cruiser with high standard spec and obvious appeal, but not a ground-breaking design.
Price: €495,700 ex VAT.
j-boats.com

GRAND SOLEIL 48
Sleek Italian styling combined with proven performance and good space below deck.
Price: €569,000 ex VAT.
grandsoleil.net

Fabio Taccola

RUPERT HOLMES

Where: Port Ginesta, Barcelona
Wind: 6-12 knots; sea state slight with swell
Model tested: four cabin layout, with options including hydraulic stern platform, fabric cockpit enclosure and flybridge bimini, Code 0 with electric furler and 3kW solar panels



Gilles Martin-Raget

LAGOON
51

SPACE, COMFORT AND MODERN AMENITIES ABOUND, BUT WHAT ABOUT SAILING ABILITIES? THE LAGOON 51 MAY SURPRISE YOU THERE TOO

It's a light wind early autumn day in the Mediterranean and we've been sailing alternately under Code 0 and genoa at boat speeds occasionally touching 8 knots in 10-12 knots of true wind. It's easy and fast sailing, with the boat tracking easily, yet surprisingly responsive to the helm.

Approaching an anchorage for a short stop we sail in to the 10m contour, furl the headsail and round up into the wind to drop the mainsail. At the same time the anchor goes down and we use the weight of the boat to set the hook, checking transits as the boat finally settles head to wind. Sailing into an anchorage like this is, of course, familiar to most who have sailed reasonably nimble monohulls of modest size. However, this time I'm on a vessel two stories high, that's almost 27ft wide and weighs more than 20 tonnes.

The prototype boat's professional skippers, Nicolas Boutteloup and Manon Pestel, have done this numerous times in the six months they've been on board. By the time of our test ▶

The single helm offers a high view – but limited when berthing stern to, with transoms out of sight. Even with cameras good communication with crew on deck is essential. All key sail controls lead to the helm though

Andreas Lindlahr/EYOTY

Andreas Lindlahr/EYOTY

Gilles Martin-Raget

Right: optional hydraulic lifting transom platform can house a tender

Gilles Martin-Raget

they'd sailed the boat more than 5,000 miles, having left Les Sables d'Olonne and crossed Biscay in March, en route to the Mediterranean.

They also often leave an anchorage without starting the engines. This prototype Lagoon 51 is set up with around 3kW of solar panels, giving plenty of juice for running the windlass. In fact it's entirely self sufficient for power, despite a whopping 500lt of fridge and freezer capacity, unless the aircon is used. The only other thing it doesn't do is heat water, although a solution to that problem may not be far off.

The rig is configured very differently to earlier Lagoons, with the mast moved forward to the front of the coachroof. This makes perfect sense from a structural engineering perspective – previously the rig sat on a longitudinal beam supported at each end of the coachroof – so the new arrangement saves weight and complexity.

It also allows for a sail plan with a large roach mainsail (or optional square top main), plus a 120% overlapping headsail. This configuration means sufficient sail area can be achieved with a shorter mast, lowering the centre of effort and reducing weight aloft.

A downside is that self-tacking headsails are no longer feasible, but tacking the larger genoa still proved to be no problem for one person, even though the sheets are handled on opposite sides of the flybridge. On the plus side, designer Vincent Laurent Prévost of VPLP told me this larger headsail, "helps to pull the boat over waves when sailing upwind in a way that doesn't happen when a catamaran has a small foretriangle."

To maintain balance the keels are also further forward, reducing interference and improving steering efficiency. The platforms at the aft end of the hulls have also been extended, increasing the size of the bathing platforms and helping dampen pitching when sailing over waves.

Even in quite light airs the helm responds positively, although this is not a close-winded design. The best we managed to windward was a true wind angle a fraction under 55°, which produced 5.5 knots of boat speed in 7-8

Test boat has the optional fabric cockpit enclosure, which helps to make this aft area a huge second saloon. Even when the large cockpit table is fully extended for dining there's still enough space for easy circulation

Nicolas Claris

knots of breeze. Any attempt to squeeze up closer than this resulted in a big drop of boat speed.

Bearing away onto more of a reach, with a true wind angle of 70-75° saw speed increase to 6-6.5 knots. This increased to 7 knots once we deployed the Code 0 at a TWA of 110-115°.

On my first sail a leftover swell created noticeable movement up on the flybridge, although the accelerations were fairly gentle. A more important downside is that the Code 0 creates a huge blind spot of almost 90°. To a lesser extent the same is also true of the jib when the sheet's eased for reaching. Monohulls of course have a similar problem, but with a flybridge cat you have to descend a flight of stairs to look to leeward.

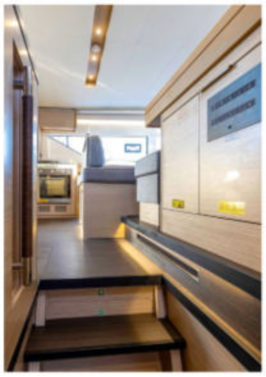
When close-hauled the situation is much better as you only have to shuffle a short distance across the wide (3-4 person) helm seat to see round the jib. Sitting to one side of the central wheel also allows you to see the telltales easily. The seating behind the helm station means watch keeping doesn't need to be a lonely experience – this is a convivial and social area with space for up to 6-8 people. It also offers a degree of privacy when berthed stern to a busy quay.

All sail handling, with the exception of hoisting and dropping reaching and downwind sails is done from the flybridge, where lines lead both sides of the wheel to three winches, all of which were upgraded to electric on our test boat. Similarly, the headsail furler and Code 0 furler both had the optional electric drive.

The three outdoor sitting, dining and socialising areas are a key benefit of this design. The aft cockpit has a pair of generously upholstered three-seater settees, plus a four-person bench across the transom. The cockpit table is offset to port, with two fold-out leaves for dining, leaving a clear walk-through to the saloon, starboard ▶

Nicolas Claris

The test boat is the first Lagoon with new Alpi 'sand oak' interior joinery in a lighter tone than earlier boats



Andreas Lindlahr/EYOTY

Nicolas Claris

Andreas Lindahr/EYOTY

Left: two of the three double cabins in the port hull, which also features two heads with separate shower stalls. The mid cabin (on right) has limited stowage

Nicolas Claris

Above: palatial owner's cabin in the starboard hull is flooded with natural light from large windows

transom and side deck. There's also a full-size outdoor sink and drainer, with fridge, plus a barbecue right aft.

However, it lacks the Lagoon 55's very appealing terrace that can be opened up to the water, as the aft structural beam has to extend above the cockpit sole. Instead our test boat was fitted with a large optional hydraulic lifting platform at the transom that forms a giant sunbathing/swimming platform and incorporates tender stowage.

A small forward cockpit ahead of the saloon has space for 4-5 people, including two sunbeds and a coffee table on top of the windlass. It therefore doesn't rival the deep, solid cockpit, with all-round party seating, of some brands and lacks direct access from the saloon. However, the Lagoon's arrangement doesn't add weight well forward and won't hold several tonnes of water if a wave crest breaks over the bows – important points for offshore and bluewater sailing.

Of course this boat also offers huge internal accommodation, with ample space when the weather dictates spending time indoors with aircon running. The big saloon table has both dining and coffee table modes and space to seat 10, although eight would be more comfortable. This area is slightly raised, with windows at eye level, although the view is blocked on both aft quarters, which makes it less suited as a watch keeping station in inclement weather. There's also a navstation/desk area, with space to fit a multi-function display. Natural ventilation is primarily from big opening ports in the front coachroof windows.

The galley forms an L-shape on both sides of the aft end of the saloon, with sink, small dishwasher and four-burner gas cooker to port. To starboard is extensive fridge/freezer capacity, totalling almost 400lt.

Worktop space is impressive both sides and fiddles are high enough to contain liquid spills and keep items in place in rough seas. Stowage is excellent, including eye level lockers, drawers and lockers below the counter top, plus large underfloor volumes. There's also a dedicated space for a coffee machine, while a washer/dryer can be fitted in the starboard hull and an additional 100lt freezer in the port hull.

LAYOUT OPTIONS

Our test boat was configured with a four cabin/three heads owner's layout. The port hull houses three double cabins and two heads, both with separate shower stalls. The mid cabin is the smallest of these and has limited stowage, while the forward one has best stowage, but shares the head and shower. An option with two cabins in this hull is also offered. With this arrangement the forward cabin doesn't gain additional floor space, but becomes fully en-suite and there's even more stowage.

Owner's accommodation in the starboard hull is ▶

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Gilles Martin-Raget

So much deck space: the flybridge alone has space for four to six to sit around a coffee table

palatial, with huge hull windows that eliminate the semi basement feel some older multihulls have. There are also massive stowage volumes in a range of formats, right down to organisation of paperwork, plus a corner sofa and big dressing table/desk.

The huge bathroom forward has his and hers basins, a completely enclosed toilet and big shower.

The many onboard systems make this yacht as comfortable and easy to live on as any home on shore, although maintenance is obviously more complex and onerous. The watermaker produces 100lt per hour on 12V, so can be run from the solar panels, even though it draws 40A. It's easily accessed, under the floor of the port aft cabin. Equally, the extensive fridge and freezer capacities will provide a huge length of self-sufficiency before needing to reprovision or refuel.

OUR VERDICT

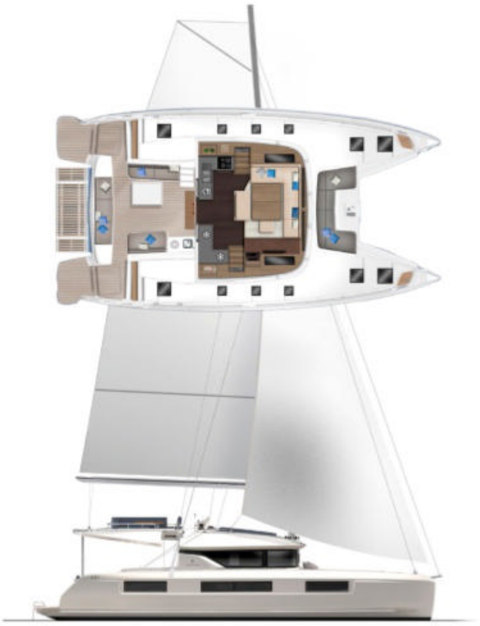
It's easy to dismiss boats of this style as being hopelessly compromised, yet the Lagoon 51 surprised me with the way it sails. Despite appearances, it's still possible to enjoy the sailing experience, although of course it's a long way from delivering the feel of sailing a lighter multihull such as an Outremer or Neel.

However, this boat is about the entire experience of life afloat and will spend a lot of time being used as a platform on which to relax and chill, swim and as a base for watersports. It excels in this respect, yet in winter would also make a fantastic city centre pad.

It's therefore easy to appreciate why these boats are so popular. Few million pound-plus yachts sell in big numbers, yet Lagoon took 100 orders within six months of the first boat hitting the water, with roughly one third of sales to private owners. ■

WATCH THE VIDEO
youtube.com/yachtingworld

LAGOON 51



SPECIFICATIONS

- **LOA** 15.35m 50ft 4in
- **LWL** 14.31m 46ft 1in
- **Beam** 8.10m 26ft 7in
- **Draught** 1.40m 4ft 7in
- **Displacement** 19,914kg 43,910lb
- **Upwind sail area** (std) 148m^2 1,592ft^2
- **Upwind sail area** (square top main) 151m^2 1,625ft^2
- **Fresh water** 2 x 240lt
- **Diesel** 2 x 520lt
- **Engines** 2 x 80hp
- **Design** VPLP, Patrick le Quément and Nauta Design

Price €973,500 ex VAT (as tested €1,565,200)
cata-lagoon.com

ALSO CONSIDER

FOUNTAINE PAJOT AURA 51

Supremely spacious new model that stops short of a full flybridge with a numerous layouts up to 6 cabin/6 heads. Price €951,842 ex VAT. **fountaine-pajot.com**

Ludovic Fruchaud

LEOPARD 50

Full flybridge outdoor saloon, but offset and slightly lower helm station, plus four or five cabin accommodation. Price €819,000 ex VAT. **leopardcatamarans.co.uk**

Tui Marine

CATANA OCEAN CLASS

This 49-footer marks a departure for this performance-oriented yard thanks to huge bridgedeck accommodation. Price €1,036,700 ex VAT. **catana.com**

Arnaud Rizon

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NEW YACHTS

TOBY HODGES ON A NEW DAWN OF SEMI-CUSTOM SUPERCATS

Gunboat 70 and 80

In the seven years since Grand Large Yachting purchased cult catamaran brand Gunboat and brought it to a new headquarters in the south of France, it has steadily increased its market stature. Today we see a yard at full capacity, specialising in a real niche of top end quality and high performance, at a big size (and cost).

It has two GB72Vs in build (its first flybridge model), two GB80s, and numbers six and seven of its GB68 – which is now redesigned as the GB70 (featured here). When you consider the GB80 is equivalent to a 100ft superyacht in size and price, you start to understand quite how far this brand has progressed.

I have toured the La Grande-Motte yard a couple of times, the most recent being last year, and have been highly impressed with the quality of engineering and attention to detail.

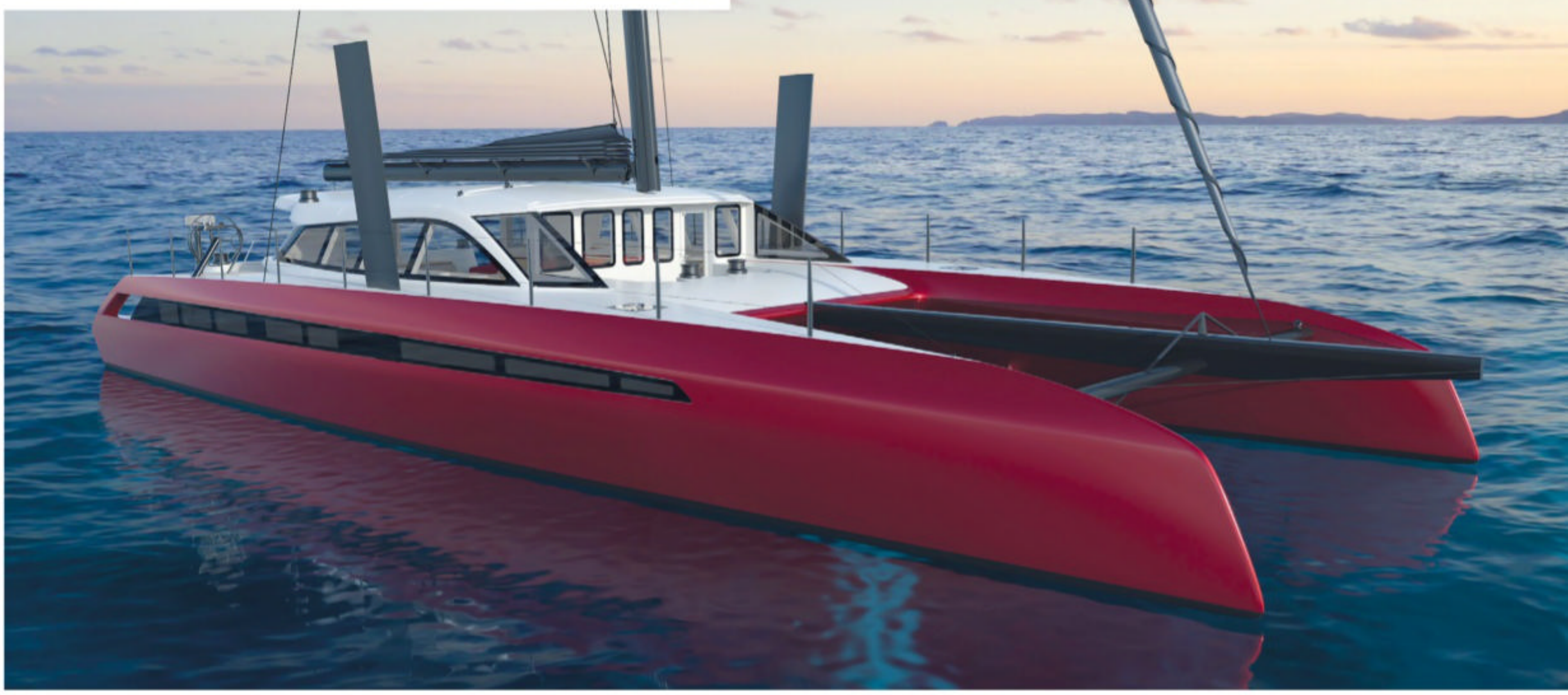
When I spoke with Gunboat's managing partner, Benoit Lebizay, both then and at the Düsseldorf boat show in January, he explained that they see little point in going below this current size range. Its client base now is a high profile one, with owners typically coming from maxi racing yachts and looking to reduce crew numbers. He also reasons that 55ft is the maximum size before you need a crew, and that once you have a crew you then need privacy.

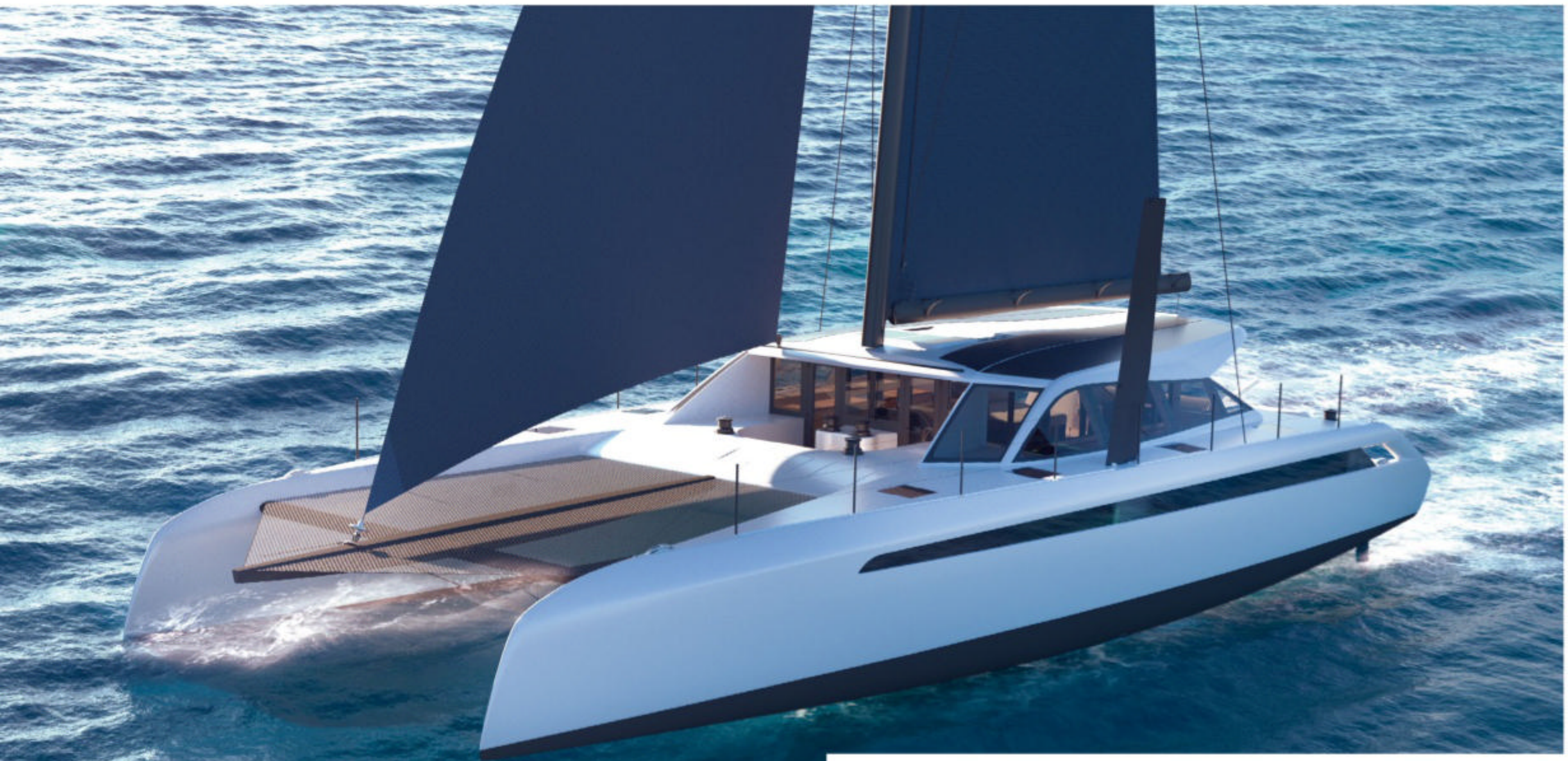
GB80

A supercat capable of matching low single figure windspeeds yet topping 30 knots, the GB80 has a pretty unique brief: a Grand Prix maxi-sized cat, that can be handled by a small crew, is capable of luxurious world cruising and is a semi-custom repeatable build!

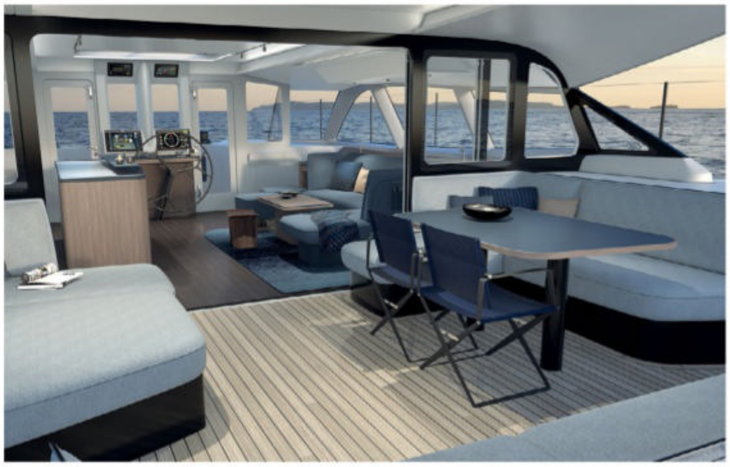
The first GB80 is the latest in serial boat owner Irvine Laidlaw's *Highland Fling* series, due to launch this summer, while the second is for Team Argo. Hence you get the idea these are for serious, competitive and experienced racing

Gunboat has two of its new GB80 models already in build for a pair of high profile serial boat owners





The GB70 has longer hulls than the 68 and the mast is brought aft onto the coachroof. Everything above deck is new



Better interior flow and visibility, plus a canting wheel

sailors who want a turbo cat they can also cruise, with the equivalent accommodation of a maxi yacht. “The cult is coming back – but at a higher end,” thinks Lebizay.

To see these beasts in construction phase is eye-opening. These are full prepreg carbon builds with much of the construction done by industry leaders Fibre Mechanics in Lymington and Multiplast in France. Pick up a panel and it’s featherlight yet super strong.

An aircraft company builds the furniture in Nomex (including 6mm Corian veneer) – it’s incredibly expensive but the most valuable place to save weight, says Lebizay.

Gunboat is now updating its GB68s with the learnings and technology from the GB80.

GB70

The GB68, the first new VPLP designed model under Grand Large Yachting’s ownership, has already proved a success. Gunboat has delivered five 68s and has two in build. But this is a six-year-old design now, and has evolved alongside performance developments of the GB80 in build. The new, slightly extended version shown above, is the GB70.

It looks very similar, with the same sporty aesthetic appeal, but the longer hulls and different mast placement could make key differences in performance and handling.

“For this V2 we wanted a small 80, not a big 68,” Lebizay explains. “Actually it’s a 72 but we already had a 72 [a flybridge model].” Where the GB72V is an extended GB68, with the extension added midships to create wider hulls for increased payload, the 70s are kept narrow. Everything above deck uses new moulds.

A dual aft helm option is now offered as well as Gunboat’s signature forward cockpit and interior helm (now with a canting wheel).

Another significant alteration is that the mast is further aft and is stepped on the coachroof rather than in front of the cockpit. This helps allow for a high aspect ratio main and larger foresails, including a generous self-tacking J2/Solent. The reasoning is to make it more balanced and easy to handle.

It should also make a big difference to the views from the interior wheel and saloon.

Historically, Gunboats have had forward cockpits, transverse berths and midships engines to help centralise weight. “But we know how to maintain balance with the mast moved aft like raceboats,” says Lebizay. The engines are now in the more conventional position aft and have improved sound proofing insulation.

The saloon area has been extended with better flow and has larger sliding doors connecting the aft cockpit. The owner cabin is now also larger with a longitudinal berth, which is still close to midships, with a bathroom aft. The GB70 is offered as a five cabin version as standard or a four cabin option with galley and crew mess in the port hull to help give more privacy and segregation for owners.

Lebizay thinks the GB70 will be around two tonnes heavier than the GB68, but it is longer and will be able to take a seven tonne payload. ▶

The first of the McConaghy MC55s will launch in Hong Kong later this season

Fully retractable doors and electric sliding windows create 360° views

MC55 and MC75

If you're after a performance yacht, then going to specialist builders in that area makes plenty of sense. McConaghy has built some of the world's most notable race boats over its five decades from its Australian and Chinese yards – it is currently shipping a foiling AC40 every five weeks for the various America's Cup teams.

McConaghy teamed up with British designer Jason Ker to create a new range of fast cruising multihulls, the first of which, the MC50, was exhibited at the International Multihull Show five years ago.

Since then we have seen a series of alterations and tweaks to this design – it grew to a 52, then a 53 (which recently arrived in the UK). However, these were deemed too close in size to this MC55, the first of which launches in Hong Kong this season. The yard has also found success with power versions of the concept.

The MC multihull range shares a unique feature in the dual aft flybridge helms. Jason Ker also came up with an innovative hydraulic centreboard system which uses a safety sheer pin to allow it to rotate up in the event of impact. The board casings are neatly integrated below the soles of the cabins.

The new MC55 has a larger aft deck and flybridge compared to the original MC50, while McConaghy says that all its multihulls moving forward will also feature a forward cockpit. Built in vacuum-infused E-glass, carbon composite and corecell foam, it features a carbon bowsprit with integrated anchor launching system. And it's capable of clocking reaching speeds well over 20 knots.

For those who don't fancy steering from the flybridge, there's an interior helmstation central and forward by the mast base on the main deck.

The m2atelier-designed interior features a very open layout with retractable glass sliding doors aft and is offered in a three or four cabin layout, the former with an owner's hull, with study.

MC75 is destined to be the range's flagship model

NEW FLAGSHIP MC75

McConaghy is also due to launch its largest MC multihull to date, the MC75, this summer.

This will be the first of the series with a completely new interior design, which looks enormous thanks to a huge open saloon devoid of bulkheads. Described as 'a pocket superyacht', it features a large covered flybridge, huge aft terrace walkways and a forward social cockpit with direct access from the main living area. Options are for three, four or five cabin layouts, all en-suite, with separate crew accommodation.

Above: tiller options on the sporty new 52. Left: a jacuzzi on the flybridge at 25 knots anyone? The HH88 launches this spring

HH77/88

The popularity of the Hudson Yacht Group's 11-year old HH Catamarans brand continues to soar, particularly in the 45-55ft range, and with its first, highly customised supercat due for launch this summer. These high performance carbon composite Morrelli & Melvin designs are built in a high tech 1.2 million ft² facility in Xiamen, China.

Three HH50s and two HH55s launched last year, while the first of four HH60s launches this spring (in a wonderfully shocking pink).

Demand for its new models looks even more impressive: seven HH52s are currently under way, including a hybrid/eco-powered new version of the HH50, with the first due for launch late this year. This is a really sporty looking machine, offered with both aft and forward helm layouts, the latter with tiller steering options too.

HH also has nine of the brand new smaller sister HH44s in progress, the first launching this spring (30 were signed off the drawings last autumn!) Hybrid power is offered now on all HH models, along with big solar panel space designed in.

These latest HH77 and 88 supercats, weighing 36 and 45 tonnes respectively, are full carbon builds conceived to offer sensational speeds in luxurious comfort. The layouts show accommodation for eight guests and three crew or 10 guests and four crew.

The HH88 is designed as the largest all carbon cruising cat to date and the owner of the first example in build opted for the full luxe cruising works of an air conditioned bridgedeck complete with hot tub to suit a luxury charter brief – all while still capable of cruising in the late teens.

Kinetic did a spectacular photoshoot of its latest KC54 *Kealoha* ripping around the waters off Cape Town last autumn. This all-carbon model is designed for fast short-handed sailing and features a new sliding door system, which stacks the doors to either side of the boat to help open up the whole aft of the main deck. The US brand builds its top quality fast cats to Simonis Voogd Designs from its yard in Knysna, South Africa. It currently offers 54ft or 62ft designs and has four boats in build this year.

GEAR FOCUS

NEXT GEN SATCOMS / IRIDIUM GO! EXEC VS STARLINK ROAM

THERE ARE EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS FROM BIG NEW BRANDS IN THE SATCOM SCENE, BUT WHAT MIGHT SUIT YOUR SAILING? RUPERT HOLMES REPORTS

Until recently, developments in satellite communications were painfully slow, but the pace of change started to quicken a few years ago and is today accelerating rapidly. There's now a wider choice and vastly improved data speeds, driven by new generation satellites and a growing number of market players, including big brands such as Apple, Amazon and of course Elon Musk/SpaceX's rapidly expanding Starlink service.

At the same time there's still space in the market for low cost existing devices that provide mostly text-based comms and a data connection to allow weather GRIBs and GMDSS weather forecasts to be downloaded. The original Iridium GO!, which launched almost a decade ago, quickly became the most popular device for long distance passagemaking, partly as the result of an unlimited data plan, even though downloads are at a snail's pace.

GO! EXEC

The new Iridium GO! exec, launched this spring, will be sold alongside the original device. It's borne of a similar ethos, but with data speeds 40x higher and the addition of a microphone, loudspeaker and touchscreen. This allows voice calls to be made and received without pairing the unit to a smartphone – potentially useful if you have to take it to the liferaft. Like the original it can also be used as a wifi hub to connect phones, tablets or laptops to the Iridium network.

At its core is the Iridium Certus 100 hardware, which gives download speeds of 88kbps and uploads of 22kbps. The download speed is only 50% faster than old school dial-up internet, so it's still a narrowband product.

Nevertheless it's a marked improvement that allows satellite weather images showing the exact location of fronts or storm cells to be downloaded, or for medium-resolution photos to be sent to social media.

Unless a satellite system is only used for a one-off ocean passage, airtime and data prices have a much bigger bearing on long term costs than hardware costs. What made the original Iridium GO! unit a no-brainer for many was the offer of an unlimited data plan for US$140 per month (since increased to $160-175).

Of course, you can't eat much data at only 2.4kpbs, but the knowledge you'll never run out at sea, or get saddled with an unexpectedly big bill, is hugely reassuring.

Sadly, but perhaps not surprisingly, this offer isn't carried forward to the new device. Still, monthly and annual plans are at a lower price than most sat comms, with a 50Mb monthly package that would suffice for basic weather forecasting and text only comms, including email plus occasional voice calls, priced at US$160 per month – less than half the current price of equivalent Iridium Certus plans.

Iridium GO! exec has much faster data speeds and can still be paired to phones and other mobile devices

12:00
Iridium
Iridium GO!
exec™
Select Icon to Get Started
SOS

Iridium
Incoming Call
61409019007
Incoming call on Line 1 (88167701759)
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SOS
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The Iridium GO! exec also adds a touchscreen, microphone and speaker, allowing voice calls without needing to pair to a phone

MUSK'S LATEST ALTERNATIVE: STARLINK ROAM

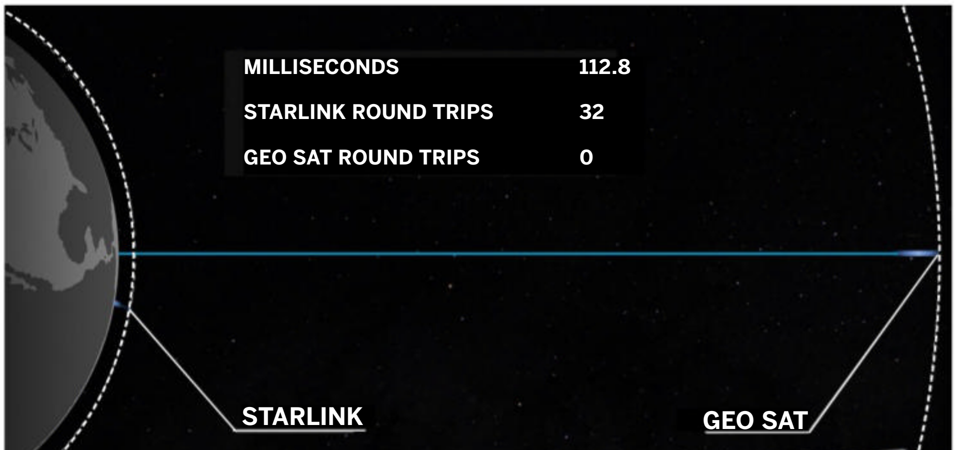
The Iridium GO! exec's data prices and bandwidth are still a long way from those offered by Elon Musk's Starlink service, which provides full broadband data speeds of up to 50-250Mbps (thanks to using thousands of low orbiting, low latency satellites). At the time of writing, for UK customers the hardware with a standard antenna costs only £460 plus £75 per month for airtime, with the new Roam service priced at £95 monthly. However, the Flat High Performance antenna is the only one approved for in-motion use and costs £2,400.

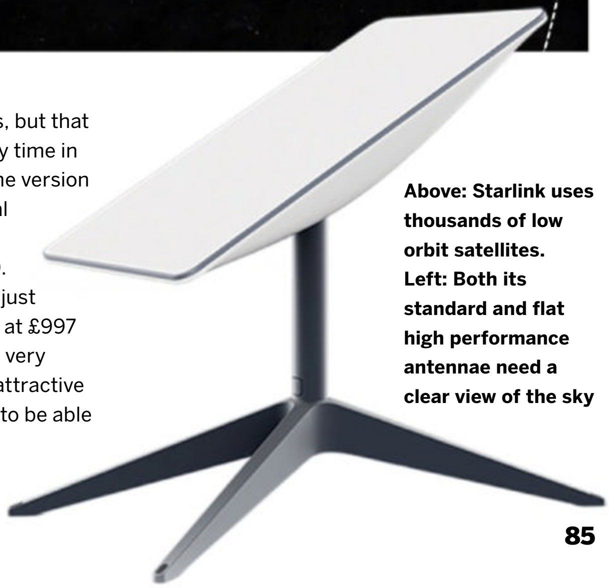
Starlink appears to be a no-brainer for many and in the two and a half years since launch has been fitted to a growing number of yachts and fishing vessels. A geofence 12 miles from the coast originally precluded use offshore, but following its removal users could get broadband internet on ocean passages.

Historically most have used the RV (Recreational Vehicle) plan afloat, which was renamed Roam in early March this year. At the same time there's a clear warning to users that it's only intended for use on land.

It's important to recognise that many of the evangelists for using Starlink afloat have been successfully using it outside the terms of service, which are constantly evolving. To date this doesn't seem to have created problems, but that could change with minimal notice at any time in the future. There is a dedicated Maritime version of Starlink, but it's aimed at commercial vessels with a monthly subscription for UK-based users costing almost £5,000. At the time of writing however, Starlink just announced an additional Maritime plan at £997 per month for 1Tb of data. That is still a very expensive annual bill, but may be very attractive for those running a business who need to be able to stay in contact.

While Starlink has been a game ▶





Above: Starlink uses thousands of low orbit satellites. Left: Both its standard and flat high performance antennae need a clear view of the sky

Amazon is the latest player to enter the market for satcoms with Project Kuiper

changer for many, it comes with a risk that geofencing could be implemented again at any time to deny vessels at sea access to the Roam service. On the positive side it seems less likely, at least in the short term, that harbours and anchorages will be routinely excluded from coverage, due to the risk of nearby users on shore also being cut off.

An important benefit of both Iridium and Inmarsat systems is that they are stable and dependable platforms that are compliant with GMDSS. While Starlink suits some cruising yachts well and may continue to be ideal for use in remote anchorages with no 4G data connection, it does not yet appear to be suitable for yachts to rely on for safety related purposes mid-ocean.

AMAZON WEIGHS IN

In March, Amazon (boss Jeff Bezos, left), announced further information about Project Kuiper outlining details of three antennae, including a small mobile device weighing 450g that will give 100Mbps speeds – ie 1,000 times faster than Iridium's Certus 100. A larger 11in square standard antenna will deliver up to 400Mbps and will cost $400 to produce.

Mass production of Amazon's low-earth orbit satellites will be in full swing later this year, with the system scheduled to accept its first customers in 2024.

SAT COMMS FOR SMARTPHONES

Given the small size of some black box satellite messaging devices it seemed only a matter of time before similar functionality was built into some smartphones.

That's already a reality, albeit in a very limited sense, for iPhone 14 users in the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, and the UK, via the Globalstar constellation. It's intended as a fallback emergency system to alert emergency services and is only available when there's no cellular or wifi coverage available from any carrier.

Two new ruggedised Android smart phones, the CAT S75 and Motorola Defy 2, include the Bullitt Satellite Connect service that offers 30 two-way satellite text messages for a subscription cost of US$5 per month, operating via geostationary satellites.

Samsung's latest Galaxy S23 smartphone was widely tipped to ship with a satellite messaging function but, to the surprise of many industry insiders, that didn't happen. Nevertheless, later this year a wider range of Android phones will have two-way satellite text functionality using the Qualcomm Snapdragon Satellite service that was announced in January and uses the Iridium constellation.

CAT® S75
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DROP TESTED: UP TO 1.8M (6FT) ONTO STEEL
IP68/IP69K SAND, DUST AND DIRT RESISTANT
CAT

The CAT S75 is one of the few smartphones that currently feature a satellite text messaging function

SATCOM OPTIONS

SATELLITE MESSENGERS

Low cost basic text messaging and tracking, though data can't be downloaded. Stand-alone models are good to take to a liferaft, while types that interface with a smartphone are ideal for crewmembers. See our full review over the page.

From £100

IRIDIUM GO!

Neat all-in-one unit with affordable capped airtime costs and very low power consumption, but painfully slow (2.4kbps) data speeds and awkward for voice communications.

Hardware approx £1,250, inc external marine antenna

IRIDIUM CERTUS 100/200

Game changing compact and low power satellite phone with fast data speeds for a relatively low cost device, but still more expensive than the Iridium GO! exec.

Hardware approx £3,600

IRIDIUM GO! EXEC

Certus 100 core hardware in a box with speaker phone and touchscreen. 40x faster than the original unit, but without the all-you-can-eat data plan.

From US$1,600

INMARSAT FLEET ONE

The bottom end of Inmarsat's fixed systems offers data speeds of 100kbps, but air time packages are generally more expensive.

Hardware from approx £2,750

STARLINK

Low cost full broadband, but terms of service exclude use at sea for all but the expensive Maritime service

From £480

IRIDIUM AND INMARSAT HANDHELD PHONES

These still have a place in the grab bag and typically offer data at 2.4kbps.

From approx £1,400

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GEAR REVIEW

PORTABLE SATELLITE MESSENGERS

IF YOU'RE AFTER A PORTABLE, ECONOMIC SATELLITE DEVICE FOR EMERGENCIES OR OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATION, THERE'S A RANGE OF OPTIONS. **FOX MORGAN** DETAILS THE LATEST AND BEST

BEST FOR
compact size

GARMIN INREACH MINI 2

Garmin's latest iteration of its InReach is the smallest tracker currently available, a 100g wearable device that you can clip onto a bag or belt loop and virtually forget it's there. You can hook up to it via the Garmin App and send and receive texts using bluetooth connectivity with a smartphone. If your phone battery dies, you can still send pre-set messages directly from the unit.

Key features include an electronic compass and an SOS function which alerts a 24/7 emergency response centre. It will store 1,000 waypoints or favourite locations and has an average battery life of 14 days (pretty impressive considering how small that battery is!) – so you could also take this miniscule tracker with you mountain biking, fell running, hiking, skiing and so on.

Pros Tiny device fits easily in any compact gear set up
Cons Some may find the interface fiddly
Price £349.99, **garmin.com**
Typical subscription costs Activation fee £25.00, monthly fee: £32.00

BEST FOR
retaining same phone number

ACR BIVY STICK

The Bivy Stick satellite messenger and Bivy App from ACR transforms your smartphone into a satellite communicator. A contract is required but there are no activation fees; simply connect your phone to the Bivy Stick via Bluetooth to access the Iridium satellite network.

On activation you are assigned a dedicated phone number and email address allowing you to maintain the same contact details throughout, unlike some other systems that assign a new number with each message making it impossible for any external contacts to initiate calls or messages.

Features include two-way SMS messaging, SOS calls, location sharing, and in-depth weather reports sent to your smartphone. The Bivy App gives stats including current pace, mileage, altitude, as well as offline maps.

Pros Easy app interface, roll-over credits, you keep the same number
Cons Not ruggedised, no built-in screen
Price $249.95, **acrartex.com**
Typical subscription cost Cost per month £24.99

GARMIN INREACH MESSENGER

The Garmin inReach Messenger switches automatically between standard mobile land signals and satellite signals when out of land network signal range. Through the Messenger App, you can communicate with other people who have the same app and it includes Garmin's SOS button functionality. It features an extended battery life of up to 200 hours, plus reverse charging from another device, which means you can stay connected for longer.

BEST FOR
basic messages

Pros A low cost way to stay in touch via satellite; easy to use Garmin app
Cons May be a little too basic for some users, as it doesn't do tracking
Price £249.99, **garmin.com**
Typical subscription costs Activation fee £25.00, monthly Fee £32.00

ZOLEO SATELLITE COMMUNICATOR

A smart little satellite messenger, the Zoleo relies on your mobile phone to function fully using an app. With the app you can message others with the same app on their phone. The Zoleo will use your phone signal first, then switch to satellite credit/allowance when your mobile phone is out of range of any land signal. It gives you an assigned number that doesn't change for receiving SMS texts and there's a dedicated email address too.

Without a mobile phone you can still press the 'check in' button which notifies a designated person of your GPS coordinates or use the SOS button (which is monitored 24/7). And you can control how often Zoleo checks the Iridium satellite network for new messages – choose a shorter interval for improved messaging or a longer interval to extend battery life of the device (200 hours battery life while checking for messages every 12 minutes).

BEST FOR retaining same phone number

zoleo
SOS
SOS

Pros Handy built in clip, rugged shockproof outer, simple interface
Cons Needs a smartphone and app to send messages; doesn't support voice calls
Price £199, **zoleo.com**
Typical subscription costs Monthly fee £32 (location Share+ is an additional £4.50)

SPOT X

This may resemble a Blackberry phone from the early 2000s, but don't let that fool you – it's ruggedised and waterproofed to IP67 and can connect via bluetooth to your smartphone. Despite looking like a phone, the Spot X doesn't support voice calls – the Iridium GO! is the only device here which does.

The Spot X can be pre loaded with a bunch of messages that are unlimited to send, as are check-ins. This averages the lowest price per SMS message compared to other devices on a similar price plan, so it's certainly one to consider if you're on a budget.

Where all the other devices featured here use Iridium, this uses the Globalstar satellite network. It doesn't give you coverage near the poles, but coverage is suitable for most users around Europe, North America, South America and Australia.

spot X
S.O.S.
ALT
SPACE

BEST FOR standalone tracker/ messenger

Pros Message directly from the device; built-in compass; good value
Cons Bulky; Globalstar doesn't have full global coverage; small keyboard buttons
Price €299, **findmespot.com**
Typical usage costs Activation fee €29.95; €24.95 per month

iridium CONNECTED
TRACKING

YB TRACKING YB3

This tracker has been around for over 10 years now and is widely used across a range of offshore races and other events as a way to plot whole fleets of boats onto a chart and track their progress. But the YB3 is also a really simple tool for anyone who wants to track their journey on a viewable map. You can send messages anywhere in the world via Iridium, either by pre-setting them in the menu or by connecting up your smartphone via bluetooth.

A bulky unit at 303g, it has some great value packages for tracking purposes.

BEST FOR simplicity of use

Pros Rugged unit, long battery life, simple airtime plans
Cons Bulky by today's standards, overdue an update
Price: £399 ex VAT. **ybtracking.com**
Typical costs: £12 per month per device plus credits; 1 credit is used per position report, per 50 characters sent or received, delivery to a mobile phone/SMS destination and per 'mailbox check'. Bundle of 100 credits £13.00

IRIDIUM GO!

Connect your smartphone or tablet to the Iridium GO! and access voice calls and data connections via satellite. Essentially this works like a little wifi dongle, albeit an expensive one that you'll not be streaming TV or films through, but you can send pictures to social media and receive data too, such as weather forecasts and emails.

You'll need to be careful with your smartphone settings to avoid burning through all of your allocation in five minutes, but with care you can have the full range of communication modes – voice, text, data message, GPS coordinate ping, tracking and SOS alerts. The data connection is a key benefit for offshore sailors as it allows you to download high-resolution GRIB files and GMDSS High Seas forecasts.

The unit is battery-powered and can be charged via USB. As a hotspot, it allows you to connect up to five devices at once.

BEST FOR unlimited text deals

iridium
10:45
iridium

Pros Unlimited texts; connect multiple devices; make calls using your own mobile phone
Cons Needs connection to a phone to use; not particularly fast data; pricy
Price £938.40, **gtc.co.uk**
Typical costs: Iridium GO! pre-paid bundles and monthly packages vary widely. Originally $140 per month ■

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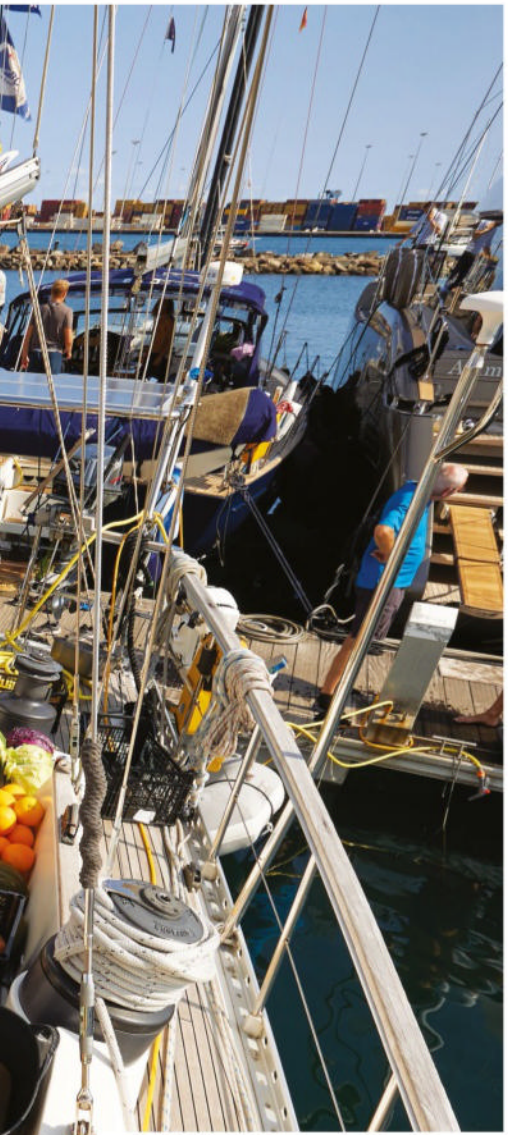
PRACTICAL

FOILING MINI 6.50 • ASYMMETRIC MODES AND TRIM • TWO-HANDED TACKING

James Mitchell/WCC

{ **Versatile peanuts (actually a legume, not a nut) are cheap and widely available for blitzing into nut butter or creating peanut satay sauce** }



SPECIAL REPORT

CATHERINE LAWSON ON PROVISIONING

Provisioning a yacht for a long period away from conventional shops, with limited cold store space, dry goods stowage and galley facilities, can be daunting. In a beautifully illustrated new book, *The Hunter & The Gatherer*, long-time liveaboards Catherine Lawson and David Bristow explain how they provision, shop, forage and cook while cruising tropical and remote waters.

The couple have been cruising for more than two decades, and are currently exploring Indonesia and south-east Asia on their 40ft catamaran *Wild One* with their daughter, Maya, seeking out remote anchorages as much as possible. That desire to be far away has shaped their food mentality, which Catherine explains is for, "ocean-loving foodies striving for better health, greater self-sufficiency and a tiny footprint on the sea."

Here, Catherine shares her advice on how to provision your yacht before departure.

GALLEY STORES

We stock our boat with all the things we like to eat in bulk quantities that will sustain us for three months or more at a time. We stop and shop wherever we can, replenishing fresh, market-bought produce and trading with locals whenever those friendly exchanges present themselves. We also enjoy our daily attempts to catch, spear and forage for seafood. There is immense freedom in living this way, and I rarely feel bound to the shore. Every sailor's pantry looks different to the next, but here's an overview of the items we strive to carry on board:

Washing fruit and vegetables before stowing can help to increase their lifespan

James Mitchell/WCC

David Bristow

The author aboard *Wild One*

■ Carbohydrates and grains

Whole grains and processed grain-based foods form the backbone of any sailor's stores. Mine includes pasta, rice (basmati, brown and sushi), quinoa, rice noodles, tortilla chips, couscous and long-life flatbreads for quick-cook pizzas and lunchtime wraps. I carry rice paper sheets (for fresh rolls), crackers, frozen pastry and plenty of flour for baking sourdough bread, which I turn into croutons and breadcrumbs too. We basically store a little bit of everything and restock with whatever is locally available in the towns we sail into. As many grain-based foods generate an excess of plastic waste, especially the convenient ones, when we can, we buy from bulk supply stores and markets that allow you to refill your own bags and containers.

■ Vegetarian proteins

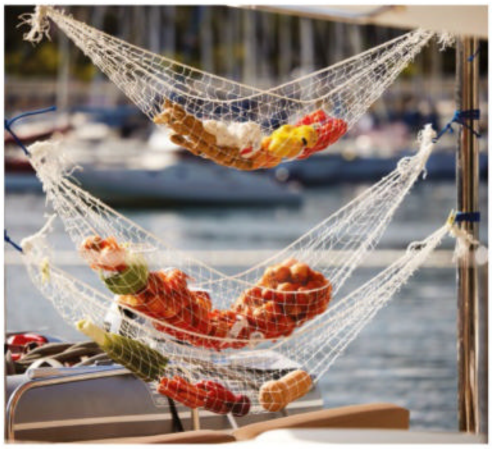
We don't eat 'meat with feet' but catch fish whenever we can. If the fish aren't biting we cook up vegetarian proteins instead. These include dried red and brown lentils (for pasta sauces and sprouting), tinned chickpeas (for speedy hummus), and tinned and dried kidney beans for Mexican chillies.

There are always eggs, tempeh and tofu on board (for Asian-style satays and curries), plus TVP (textured vegetable protein) and falafel mix. Although many sailors adore theirs, I don't own ▶

Fresh herbs can be grown in a micro-garden onboard, and preserved by solar or oven-drying

David Bristow

Right: net hammocks store fruit and vegetables on passage without bruising



James Mitchell/WCC

a pressure cooker, so I favour smaller legumes that are quick to soften. Nutritious and cheap, red lentils are my favourite for their smooth, nutty flavour. It's not essential to soak them before cooking, but it does make them more nutritious. They are a rich source of iron, zinc, and B-group vitamins. Soaking and sprouting dried chickpeas and kidney beans makes them more nutritious, lessens their cooking times and makes them much easier to digest.

■ Nuts and seeds

Before long stints at sea, I stock the boat with plenty of nuts and seeds, choosing whatever's available and affordable. My stash might include protein-packed chia seeds (for baking and breakfasts) and sunflower, sesame and pepita seeds for snacking, sprouting and adding flavour to sourdough loaves. Almonds, cashews, and walnuts add crunch to salads and stir-fries, baked slices and cakes.

■ Milk and yoghurt

When supermarkets are within easy reach, we drink all kinds of fresh milk and its alternatives, and keep a backup of UHT milk on board. But because David and I lived aboard for 10 years before we got around to installing a fridge, we have a serious powdered milk habit.

We know the weird taste is not everyone's cup of tea, but we are fairly well immune to it now. When reconstituting milk powder, always add it to water first, stirring it well before pouring it into your mug of tea. If you use lots of milk, make up a batch in a jug or sealed container and keep it in the fridge. The usual milk powder-to-water ratio is 1:4, but I make it a little creamier by simply using less water (1:3 works well for creamy coffees). Pour half of the water in, add a cup of milk powder, stir or shake well, then top it with water and stir it again.

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Local markets and stalls are an opportunity to stock up on fresh produce and experiment with new ingredients

David Bristow

■ Cheese

When we left Australia to sail to Eastern Indonesia recently, our freezer was chock-full of three things we knew we'd never find along our route: frozen berries, butter and cheese.

I've been freezing cheese for decades and now know this: the higher the fat content, the better it survives the thawing process. That means that brie, and Camembert all perform well. Cheddar and feta can be crumbly when defrosted, but your home-baked pizzas will still taste amazing. Instead of freezing feta, try preserving it in jars of olive oil.

■ Seasonings

My cupboards always contain essential flavourings such as soy sauce, kecap manis (sweet soy sauce), fish sauce, tamarind, miso paste and whole-egg mayonnaise. I keep vinegars (balsamic, apple cider, rice wine), mustard and wasabi, and a huge range of dried spices and herbs.

FRUIT AND VEG

The challenge of storing food so that it stays fresh for as long as possible comes down to some careful post-shopping day prep. Taking the time to wash, dry and store your supplies with care contributes to less waste and saves you money too.

Into my freezer goes the produce with the shortest lifespan, lightly processed to make life easier later in the trip: sautéed spinach, roast tomatoes for blitzing into passata, and excess ripe fruit to blend into breakfast smoothies.

I rinse, dry and wrap soft greens like lettuce and spinach in paper towel and seal them in snap-lock bags in the fridge. Carrots, cucumbers and aubergines keep well stored this way too, and I can rinse and reuse the snap-lock bags. In very cool climes, you can keep cos and iceberg lettuce out of the fridge, wrapped in a damp tea towel with the outer leaves intact to retain moisture. Put them somewhere cool and check on them daily, removing only the leaves you need and rewrapping them with any wrinkled outer leaves and a damp tea towel. Cabbage likes a cool spot, too, wrapped in newspaper or placed inside a cotton bag (or old pillow case).

Mushrooms go into paper bags and into the crisper. Hardier fruits and vegetables – potatoes, pumpkins, oranges, sweet potatoes, onions, shallots and garlic – can last for months in a cool, ▶

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David Bristow

David Bristow

Above: sourdough bread can be easily baked on board. Right: the family supplement their stores by fishing

dark cupboard. However, tomatoes, avocados, papayas, stone fruit, melons and pears continue to ripen once picked, so I try to buy them green and firm. The bulk of these go into a cupboard, stored in a single layer to avoid bruising. When we are ready to eat them, I'll shift a handful to the galley benchtop.

Big bunches of green bananas hang outside on a rope to be snapped off when they ripen yellow. When you have lots of fresh veggies on board, it's crucial to keep an eye on everything and be prepared to cook up and eat whatever's ready to go or starting to look a bit tired.

In my early sailing years, when I didn't even have a fridge on board, we used to dehydrate lots of fruit and veg. Solanaceous (or nightshade) vegetables dehydrate really well – tomatoes, aubergines and peppers – along with mushrooms, courgettes, mangoes, apples and bananas. Just slice everything thinly and uniformly, drying your trays in the sun first if you want to decrease your overall power usage.

On *Wild One*, we process lots of coconut meat. The firm, drier meat of orange and brown coconuts is grated or shaved (using a vegetable peeler), placed on trays and dried in the sun. Some is bagged and frozen to bake with, and some gets a low, slow toasting in the pan, seasoned afterwards with a pinch of salt or powdered vegetable stock for snacking. We also scoop the flesh out of green coconuts when we've finished drinking the water, and freeze this softer, gelatinous flesh to add to smoothies.

David Bristow

Tinned foods are freedom foods because they feed us when we are far off the beaten track. My stash includes slots of emergency veggies: tomatoes, corn, mushrooms, and beetroot ('cos I'm an Aussie, and beets belong in burgers!).

■ Pickles and preserves

My father-in-law once gifted me a jar of homemade pickled green tomatoes, and I've been inspired to follow his lead ever since. I make pickles and preserves whenever I find fresh, seasonal produce that's impossibly cheap and ready to go: chilli peach jam (can be made with mangoes and strawberries too), pickled beetroot, and crunchy, vinegary spiced pickled vegetables using cucumbers, carrots and red onion that you can munch on long after the fresh food has been eaten. We set out with a decent supply of Kalamata olives and crunchy jalapeños, and Dave makes a heavenly Coconut Sambal which ramps up the flavour of any seafood, soup, rice or noodle dish it touches.

■ Dried fruit

Because we prefer to make our own biscuits, slices and cakes, an assortment of dried fruits is essential. I like to keep stocks of dates, sultanas, cranberries, apricots, and sometimes dried mango and pineapple. There is always ginger and home-dried coconut in our galley too. ■

PRESERVING EGGS

Eggs are popular on our boat, and preserving them for two months or more is pretty simple. Start by getting your hands on the freshest, unwashed eggs you can find. Young eggs have opaque, bumpy shells with a uniform colour. Unwashed is important because the protective bloom that coats the egg when it is laid is still in place. It seals out oxygen and bacteria, which can penetrate the shell and spoil the egg. The cooler the conditions and the lower the humidity, the longer you can expect your eggs to last.

Unwashed fresh eggs outlast supermarket eggs every time, and coating and refrigerating eggs can double their lifespan. You can coat your eggs with butter, ghee, Vaseline or mineral oil, and even hot wax; sink them in a tray of wood ash; or waterglass them in a sodium silicate solution. All these options have drawbacks because what coats the egg eventually flavours the egg, too, so my absolute pick is organic coconut oil. A safe, natural sealant, coconut oil won't eventually go rancid (as butter does) or taint the taste of your eggs over time.

After long weeks at sea, I always float them in water before using (fresh eggs sink, the bad ones will float).

David Bristow

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EXTRAORDINARY BOATS

RUPERT HOLMES ON THE MANUARD FOILING MINI 6.50

Photos: James Tomlinson

***Xucia* is Mini 6.50 #1081, a radical Sam Manuard-designed foiling iteration of the popular single-handed class. Rupert Holmes looks at the accelerating pace of change in the Mini 6.50s**

The past few years have seen an explosion of activity in the Mini 6.50 class, with qualifying races for the iconic Mini Transat race oversubscribed by up to 100% and two-year waiting lists for new Series-built boats.

Yet the front of the fleet is no longer an economic place to go racing. Typical fully equipped prices for new Series builds are around €150,000, while the bill for new one-off Protos is well over double that figure, reflecting the costs of full carbon one-off boats that incorporate build knowledge gained from America's Cup campaigns, plus in some cases the enormous cost of foils.

INNOVATION HOTBED

Historically the class has been a hotbed of innovation. It's here that twin rudder designs and canting keels were first refined and proven to be reliable, even if some of the latter initially had problems when scaled up to much larger yachts. However, for the past few years almost all new development has been in the lower-powered Series fleet, where scow bows have been the norm for several years.

In contrast to the IMOCA 60 fleet, foiling designs have so far been slow to take off, but that's changing rapidly. This year sees nine new Proto boats set to be launched, many of which push the boundaries of yacht design.

Unlike foiling IMOCA 60s, Minis are allowed T-foils on their rudders, which opens up the prospect for a full flying boat. This was the approach taken by the early foiling Minis, including Seair's David Raison-designed #747 in 2017 – the first-ever flying offshore monohull – and the Verdier-designed Pogo Foiler that launched in 2019.

When I visited Lorient-based Seair back in 2018 development engineer Hugo Feydit told me they were seeing speed advantages of up to

Entry in the Mini Transat is **highly competitive**: there are currently 152 boats chasing 84 places

Carlos Manera's *Xucia* is designed to be a low-riding foiler with the transom just maintaining contact with the water

SPECIFICATION			
LOA		6.50m	21ft 4in
Beam		3.00m	9ft 10in
Draught	(Series)	1.60m	5ft 3in
	(Proto)	2.00m	6ft 7in
Displacement	(Series)	930kg	2,050lb
	(Proto)	830kg	1,830lb
Air draught	(Series)	11.00m	36ft 1in
	(Proto)	12.00m	39ft 4in
Upwind sail area	(Series)	44m^2	474ft^2
	(Proto)	49m^2	527ft^2
Downwind sail area	(Series)	105m^2	1,130ft^2
	(Proto)	115m^2	1,240ft^2

30% compared to the Archimedes Protos of the time. This boat was originally intended as a proof of concept, so it was judged imprudent to build both foils at the outset, in case testing showed a different foil shape was needed and as a result it could only foil on starboard tack. Funding was not forthcoming to build the other foil, which means the boat never raced so direct comparisons with the fleet could not be made.

However, the Pogo Foiler is a different matter. Although Covid forced a break in his early racing schedule, Tanguy Bouroullec, skipper of the first boat, produced some stunning results in 2021, winning the first two races of the season. However, he's yet to convert the boat's obvious potential into a Mini Transat win. Although his is a full-flying boat, Bouroullec is very conscious of avoiding heavy splashdowns and when I sailed with him a couple of years ago we kept the leeward corner of the transom just in contact with the water. Nevertheless, it was an exhilarating ride, with boat speed hovering around 17-18 knots for extended periods in 18-20 knots of true wind.

An astonishing **52** new Mini 6.50s were launched in 2022

LOW RIDING OPTION

One of the most recent of the new boats is *Xucia*, sail #1081, a Sam Manuard design for young Spanish skipper Carlos Manera that's been professionally built at the Sinergia Racing Group's yard in Cartagena. Manera says he and Manuard shared a similar vision and philosophy for a low-riding foiling boat with retractable C-foils that would offer a significant speed boost in medium and strong winds, without being at a disadvantage in light airs.

This is notably a different philosophy to that of another new Manuard design, Caroline Boule's #1067 *Nicomatic* (aka *Bill*), which is a full flying boat. It was launched last year, but foils weren't fitted until autumn 2022, so we can't infer anything from race results to date. A full-on flying Mini is arguably still a risky strategy, but it's one that Boule, a Franco-Polish nuclear engineer with a background in team racing and ▶

In early sea trials Boule's fully foiling #1067 *Nicomatic* clocked 23 knots of speed in only 8 knots of true wind

Retracted C-foils in this photo can be clearly seen when deployed (above)

foiling Moths, is well placed to capitalise on.

In the past Mini sailors were renowned for getting their hands dirty building their boats, but the popularity of series designs means that's far less common today. Instead the focus is on maximising time afloat, honing skills and gathering data. Bucking the trend, both Carlos and his sister, Elena, helped hands-on with the build of *Xucia*, spending six months at the yard. "Some bulkheads and many of the smaller parts were done only by me," he says, "and we have been learning from the professional team at the yard all the time."

Although the boat is a one-off, all tooling was made using CNC moulds – believed to be the first time for a Proto Mini 6.50. "We used the same technology as INEOS Britannia and other America's Cup teams," says Manera. Close attention to detail during the build means the boat came out a little lighter than expected, despite the additional weight of the foils and associated structural reinforcement compared to a conventional design.

Carlos Manera with his sister and co-skipper, Elena

CLEAR VISION

Manera, who completed the last Mini Transat in an 11-year-old Series boat, started this project with a crystal clear vision of what he believes to be necessary for such a tiny foiling boat to perform reliably in an oceanic race. His overriding priority is avoiding the big loss of speed, and decelerations that can be damaging to both boat and skipper, when a boat suddenly drops off the foils. Instead, his boat is not intended to fly high and the transom will always be in touch with the water. The foils therefore help increase righting moment and reduce wetted surface area to an absolute minimum.

"The main idea was not to fly," he told me. "Sam Manuard originally proposed the same design as Caroline's boat to me, but I turned it down because I don't want to fly. The reality at the moment is we are too far away from being able to cross big waves in hard conditions and stay flying. Maybe it can be achieved in the future, but I don't believe it's possible right now.

"The human factor means we need to be relaxed and need to have constant good mental strength. When you are full flying, it's difficult to rest, it's really difficult to keep the trim right, and it's really stressful for you and the boat."

Xucia therefore has relatively small retractable C-foils that boost righting moment, while producing a bows up attitude. This reduces the propensity for the boat to nose-dive into a wave, giving a smoother ride, while the extreme scow bow shape offers a lot of reserve buoyancy if the boat does splash down.

Manera says this means good control of the boat is maintained all the time: "You are not flying, so the autopilot can manage and you can rest, because the boat doesn't smash into waves, it just passes over them."

Getting the bows well up also reduces wetted surface area by up to 80%, which creates a massive speed boost compared to conventional boats. When the C-foils aren't needed in light airs they can be retracted clear of the water – a big gain compared to the big foils of flying boats whose drag can never be eliminated.

HIGH AVERAGES

I first spoke to Manera four weeks after the boat was launched, during which time he'd been training in mostly light to moderate winds of up to 20 knots. "The feel of the boat is really, really good," he says, "and it has the behaviour we wanted from the design, with a very soft ride on the foils and no big bursts of speed. But what's really interesting is the speed is always very constant. That was the main goal – to maximise the average speed, not peak speeds."

He also reports the boat is "really balanced and smooth" and that the pilot – currently an

NKE GyroPilot 3 while waiting for the HD version to be available – works really well.

Key priorities before the first Classe Mini races this season are to continue testing to build a full set of data that will identify the fastest mode in all conditions. Despite their diminutive size these are complex boats, with a myriad of sail plan permutations and many options for fine tuning the foil settings, so this is far from a trivial task.

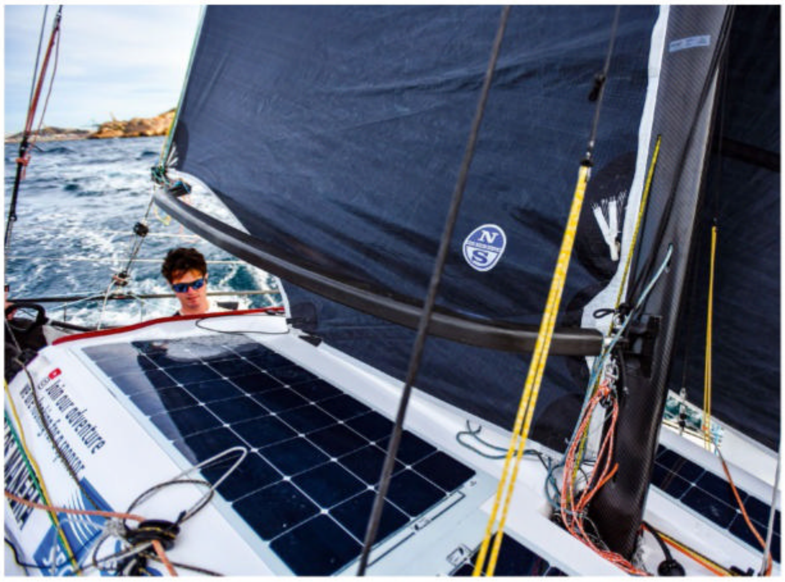
Accurate instrument calibration, for instance, is critical for a good pilot response and to build the data needed for sail selection. Given the complexities of measuring variables such as upwash angles at the top of the rig over a full range of wind speeds and angles, this takes a huge amount of effort at the highest levels of racing. So for most, perfect calibration is a distant goal you're always working towards.

It's even more complex for foiling vessels, whose boat speed sensor – one of the four critical components needed to calculate true wind speeds and angles – regularly lifts out of the water. This whole area is one that Feydit told me was "a huge challenge that required a vast amount of work" for the Seair boat.

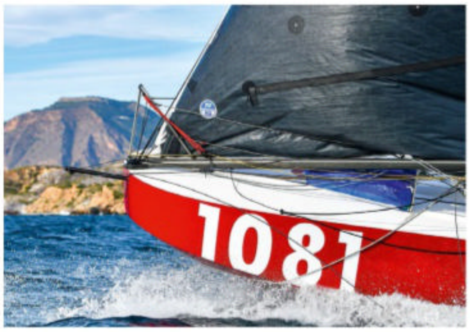
Manera has only limited time to achieve this before the first races in the Atlantic season, starting with the 250-mile two-handed Plastimo Lorient Mini race, in which he will compete with Elena as co-skipper, just after this issue goes to press. While others are struggling to get a place on this autumn's Mini Transat (starting September) Manera has already secured one of three spots reserved for boats measured for the first time during the year of the race.

Xucia is not the only entry with C-foils in this year's Mini Transat. Geoffrey Morel's #945 *Tartine*, a Marc Lombard design from 2018, was designed at the outset to be retrofitted with foils. However neither of her first two skippers, Axel Tréhin and Fabio Muzzolini – who finished 2nd in the last Mini Transat, took the plunge. The boat's new C-foils have a very large chord measurement and again provide plenty of stability while also lifting the hull just above the water.

Given the two different schools of thought among foiling boats – full flying or low-riding – plus five new non-foiling Protos from the same mould as the winner of the last two Mini Transats, it will be interesting to compare their respective performance both in the shorter races this year and in the Mini Transat. The history of the Mini class tells us the outcome of the battle between the different styles of foiling boats and the latest Archimedes designs will have big ramifications for future developments in the wider offshore racing world. ■

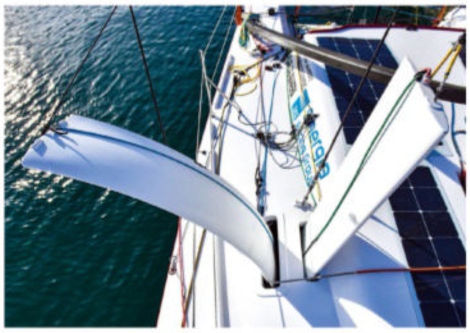


Gooseneck, boom and mainsail are all designed to boost end-plate effect to maximise the power that can be derived from the bottom of the sail

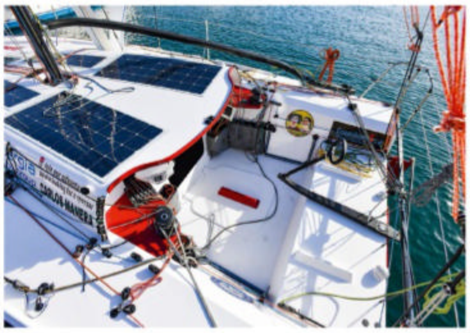


The now-standard scow bow shape provides both form stability and reserve buoyancy forward

Minis have articulating sprits that allow for deep downwind angles, but add to the complexity



In lighter airs the C-foil (left) can be retracted, to sail with canting keel and twin daggerboards



Slick twin-winch layout saves weight and borrows cockpit ideas from IMOCAs and Class 40s

Constrictor style cleats are used in preference to conventional clutches or jammers

Interior is entirely functional, but has a lot more usable space than full-flying Proto designs

Photos: James Tomlinson

5 EXPERT TIPS

FRANCESCA CLAPCICH ON ASYMMETRIC SAIL TRIM

Pro offshore sailor and Olympian Francesca Clapcich shares tips on asymmetric spinnaker sailing in lighter conditions with Andy Rice

Francesca Clapcich has enjoyed a hugely diverse and successful racing career. Her years racing the Laser Radial at Olympic level honed her wave-riding skills where sailors steer huge arcs – either luffing up or bearing away to run by the lee – in order to find the best path downwind.

Her subsequent switch to the 49erFX skiff introduced her to the very different techniques of sailing to the much fussier demands of the gennaker. While bowsprit-driven headsails may be fast and efficient, they're not very adaptable to different steering angles, nothing like a Laser or a symmetric spinnakered boat. A gennaker demands that you steer to the sail's optimum trim most of the time.

Clapcich's subsequent switch to offshore racing in boats like the VO65, Figaro 3, and IMOCA has given her a breadth of asymmetric trimming experience that makes her the perfect coach for this subject. Here are Francesca's five best tips for good asymmetric boatspeed in light to moderate conditions.

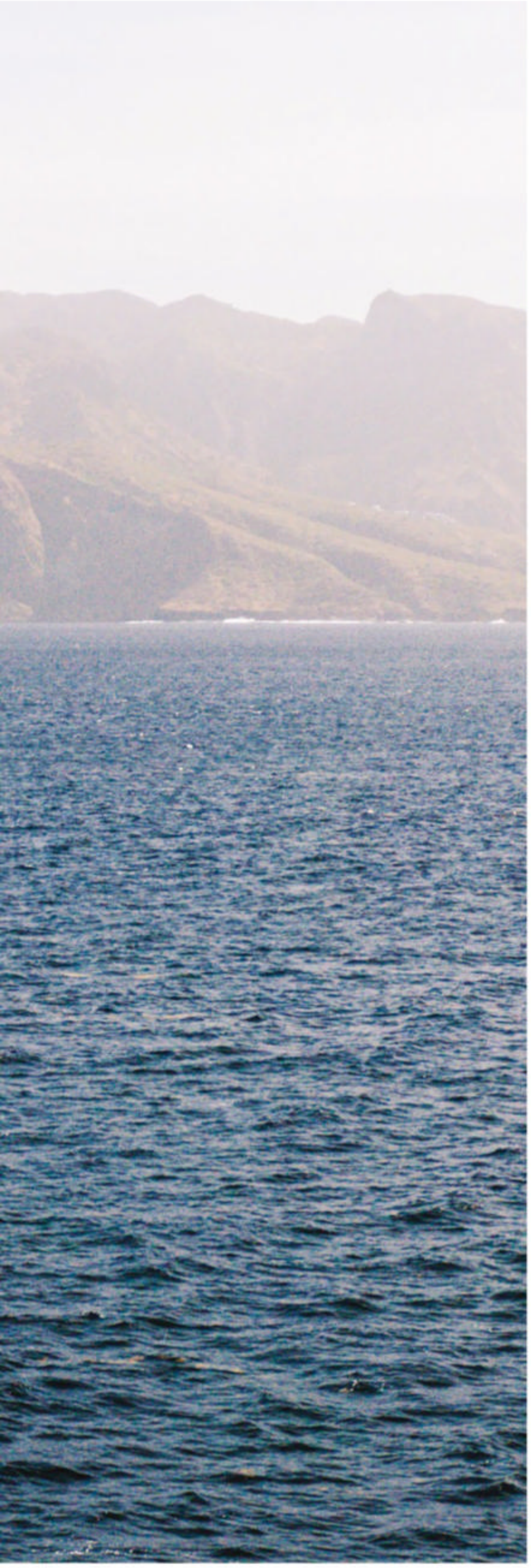
THE OCEAN RACE
11
THE OCEAN RACE
11
#OCEANHOUR
11TH HOUR RACING

Best VMG, soak low, or high and fast? Know your modes for asymmetric sailing

Amory Ross/11th Hour Racing/The Ocean Race

Francesca Clapcich has represented Italy at two Olympic Games in two classes – the Laser and 49erFX skiff – and was also 49erFX World Champion. She made a successful switch to offshore racing, competing solo on the Figaro circuit, in the Volvo Ocean Race, and currently The Ocean Race with *11th Hour Racing Team*.

Pedro Martinez/Sailing Energy



1 STAY ON BEST VMG

Any time you're sailing in a mode other than best VMG you're effectively giving away time and distance. That's why it's good to find a piece of the race course away from the other boats, where you have the space to sail the course you want. In short-course racing it's not always easy to find that open space, so you need to get good at being able to keep on sailing fast and accurately in tight lanes. And you need to be able to sail high-and-fast or low-and-slow in different tactical situations. But use those modes only when you have to. Most of the time, particularly when you're racing with A-sails, you need to sail and trim to your best VMG as much as possible.

2 IF IN DOUBT, GO LOW

Being able to sail a deeper angle than boats around you is a key skill that'll help you gain advantage on downwind legs. It gives you the option to gybe when you want to, not be dictated to by other boats. We all understand the value of pointing higher than other boats when you're sailing upwind. Sailing low downwind is also a superstrength. Being able to sail low requires concentration, focus and good communication and understanding between the helm and the trimmers. For the gennaker trimmer, it's about feeling the weight in the sheet, and sensing when the sail is beginning to stall and to lose the flow from luff to leech. It's worth practising sailing on the edge of stalling, and testing your ability to keep the boat going in this situation.

3 TRIM TO THE WAVES

Whatever kind of boat you're sailing, you need to be aware of your speed relative to the speed of the waves. In displacement sailing you're generally going a bit slower than the waves, so you're trying to surf the wave as long as possible and working really hard on the trimming all the time. The biggest problem is when you try to accelerate, you need a sail that is loose and full, with a lot of camber, generating a lot of power to make the boat accelerate. But as soon as you are on top of the wave and accelerating down the wave, you need to trim the sails in fast because your apparent wind is now moving forwards dramatically. I tend to think it's better to have sails trimmed for when you're surfing down the wave, which means you'll be over-trimmed for some of the time when going slower. In my opinion that's a much better compromise than being under-trimmed and potentially losing drive when you're running at your highest speed.

4 WORK THE MAINSAIL

Constantly trimming the gennaker requires a lot of effort. For short-handed sailing, it's sometimes easier to find a good average setting for the headsails and to use the mainsail trim to power up or 'unstick' the boat by releasing a bit of main. It's way easier to give a bit of ease to the main and get some power back in and then bring the main in as soon as you're accelerating again. Even on the VO65 when we had 10 people on deck, we tended to go for an average trim setup on the headsails and then work hard at the mainsail trim to keep the boat moving.

5 PRACTISE 'HIGH & FAST'

It's tactically good to be able to sail 'high and fast', typically at the start and at the end of a downwind leg. For example, when you've just rounded the windward mark and see a gust coming towards you, it can be worth steering up a bit higher and making sure you're one of the first in the fleet to catch the new wind and potentially accelerate over boats ahead of you. Then towards the leeward mark it can be tactically strong to approach from slightly below the layline at a hot angle, creating lots of apparent wind that gives you the chance to overtake any of the boats that gybed a bit too soon and are struggling to keep power in their sails. ■

SHORT-HANDED SAILING

PIP HARE ON TACKING

PRO SERIES

In the sixth part of a double-handed sailing series, Pip Hare has tips for upwind performance when sailing two-up

Beating can be one of the less challenging points of sail for a double-handed team. If the boat is well balanced with an appropriate sail plan, the autopilot will steer efficiently and one person can manage the cockpit while the other relaxes, banks sleep or, on longer voyages, manages cooking and maintenance. In poor weather only having one person on deck at a time ensures the crew can take time to get dry and warm between watches. There are, however, times when it is useful to have both sailors on deck when sailing upwind and in the next two parts of this series we'll focus on these times and techniques; starting with tacking, then looking at reefing and active upwind trim next issue.

Upwind sailing can be a chance for double-handed teams to go to a single-person watch

Photos: Richard Langdon/Pip Hare Ocean Racing

The secret to an efficient short-handed tack is good timing. Without the help and power of additional crewmembers it's essential the jib comes in quickly and does not load up before the bulk of the sheet has been pulled in. This means it is best to hand steer when tacking so the helmsperson can adapt their rate of turn to match the progress of the jib.

THE HELM

Set the mainsheet traveller before the tack. For simplicity and in moderate conditions pin it into the centre of the track. In windy conditions or for more speed out of the tack set to the optimum position for your new tack. Ease the mainsheet slightly before tacking. This will both allow you to sail deeper for a speed build post tack, and will help prevent the boat from getting stuck head to wind should you lose all speed during the tack.

Once the mainsail is set, the helmsperson will steer through the tack watching the jib. Initially turn into the wind quickly, ensuring you maintain momentum during the early part of the tack. Once the jib has passed through the wind, slow down your rate of turn as much as you dare without losing all boat speed. The aim is to keep the wind angle as fine as possible for as long as possible to allow your co-skipper maximum time to pull in the jib by hand while the sail is flapping. At the first indication that the helm is sluggish to respond, or when your jib is in the final stages of trim, bear away.

Post-tack you will need to build speed quickly to make up for lost momentum, particularly if beating into waves, so sail low initially – down to a 40° apparent wind angle if necessary. As the boat speed increases, start to sail higher, your co-skipper can then apply the final trim to the jib while the helm trims in the mainsheet and plays the traveller.

TRIMMER ROLE

Set up the jib sheets pre-tack in the usual way: leeward sheet flaked or coiled and ready to run, windward sheet loaded onto the new winch. Make sure you have enough turns to hold the full weight of the jib as it loads up – unlike with a full crew there will be no one to help with this.

I would not recommend loading the jib sheet into the self-tailer before the tack as doing this will add considerable friction to the system and make it harder to pull slack in quickly while the jib is unloaded.

In all but light airs aim to release the leeward jib sheet completely, just before the jib shows any sign of backing. This early point of release should give enough time to get to the other side of the cockpit before the jib has blown across the foredeck. Timing will change depending on wind strength, the stronger the wind the earlier the release. In big breeze you'll need to release the jib the minute the bow starts turning. Those who

WATCH THE VIDEO
youtube.com/yachtingworld

1 **In preparation for tacking, in moderate conditions, set the main traveller to the middle of the track.**

2 **Load up the windward winch with a handle in, but don't put the jib sheet into the self-tailer.**

3 **Remove the leeward winch handle, and keep talking – both crew and helmsperson should confirm when they're ready to tack.**

4 **Going into the tack, let off the leeward sheet earlier than you might with a full crew, then quickly sheet on the new side.**

5 **The helm goes fairly quickly into the tack but then slows the rate of turn coming out to allow the crew to get the jib sheeted in.**

6 **Trim the last few inches of the jib sheet in with a small grind on the winch as the boat speed comes up.**

are physically less strong may also benefit from releasing earlier. The speed sacrificed through an early jib release is easily offset by the ability to pull the new sheet in before it fills and without the need to grind.

When practising double-handed tacks for the first time, the need to get across the cockpit to the new sheet can feel overwhelming and lead to poor technique when dumping the old sheet. Try to stay calm and focussed on your release – it's vital that all the turns come off your leeward winch and the rope runs snag free. Even one turn left on the drum will cause enough friction to hamper sheeting in on the other side.

Once the old sheet is free, move across the cockpit and start tailing the new sheet by hand as quickly as possible. Use the full range of your arm, grabbing the sheet close to the winch, hand over hand and then throwing your elbows backwards. Longer length pulls are more efficient than multiple short ones.

The moment the load comes into the sheet, put your final wraps around the drum and into the self-tailer, then grind to a seven-eighths trim position. Let your helm know when this position is achieved so they can put the bow down to build speed. As the boat speed goes up, bring the jib in the final few turns to full trim.

Quick tip: with your head down, pulling like crazy, it can be hard to know what stage of trim the jib is at. The answer is to put marks around the boat to help both you and the helmsman easily make this judgement.

Place marks on the upper spreader that line up with the jib leech – these can be made with reflective tape to be seen at night. When the leech comes level with each mark the helm will be able to call trim.

Place marks on the jib sheets – to show three-quarters and then full trim. These can be easily seen by the trimmer but they'll only be accurate for one size of jib. You could try different coloured marks for different jibs, but avoid making a system that's too complicated to understand.

WINDY CONDITIONS

It can be really hard to get the jib in all the way on bigger boats and windy days, but grinding a loaded sail for extended periods of time is bad for the sail (extra flapping), exhausting for the crew and slow for the racing sailor.

▶

Left: autopilot on, upwind can be an opportunity to tidy up, eat and rest

Inset below: next issue we'll take a look at upwind trim

If this happens try a second luff up, post tack, to pull the rest of the sail in by hand. Tack in your usual way, but once the load comes onto the jib don't go immediately to grinding. Instead, the trimmer can hold the jib in position (they might need an extra wrap for the load). The helm will then bear away to increase boat speed rapidly – a little deeper than normal and make sure the mainsail is slightly eased. Once the boat speed is enough to carry momentum, luff the boat up aggressively to head to wind, but not beyond. During this window the trimmer should pull the remaining armfuls of the jib sheet in, then continue with the second part of the tack and speed build as normal.

COMMUNICATION

With a team of two, communication is always vital. Make sure you are talking to each other through this whole manoeuvre. Before the tack, there should be a verbal agreement you are both ready. During the tack both sailors should narrate what they are doing and seeing. The helm will talk about boat speed, how fast they are turning the boat, let the trimmer know when they are dialling down for the post-tack speed build and when they are coming back up.

The trimmer should let the helm know the second there is a problem, a snag in the old sheet, riding turn in the new sheet, not enough wraps on the drum. The trimmer should also call when they reach seven-eighths trim.

TACKING WITH AUTOPILOT

Using the tack function on the autopilot will allow both co-skippers to manage the sheets, and in moderate conditions and flat water this can be an efficient way to tack the boat.

However, the inability of the pilot to adapt the rate of turn during the tack makes it a bit of a blunt tool if anything goes wrong or conditions are not perfect.

Before trying a tack check your pilot settings. I'd recommend choosing to tack to a reciprocal wind angle, rather than through a set number of degrees. This means if you start the tack slightly off the breeze you will not end up in irons at the end. Check the tacking speed and adjust according to conditions – this will take a little tuning and the pre-set value will probably be brutally quick.

Once you have found a comfortable setting, write it down as your base level and adjust according to the wind strength. As a rule of thumb, you can tack quicker in lighter airs and flatter water.

The person releasing the old sheet needs to be ready with top wrap off the winch before the tack is initiated. The person pulling the new sheet should initiate the tack then go to the new sheet and tail. The other crewmember can then join with a winch handle. Be prepared to bear away a couple of degrees post tack, for the speed build. ■

NEXT ISSUE: Pip Hare looks at upwind sail set-up and double-handed reefing techniques.

TROUBLESHOOTING

- **Riding turns on the new winch** Try one less wrap around the drum when initially pulling in. Overhaul the new jib sheet before the tack so there is no unnecessary slack in the system. Check the lead from your jib cars to your winch – it may need to be made lower with an extra fairlead
- **Jib backs during tack** Release the jib earlier, take the top wrap off before the tack is started. Slow down the rate of turn. Communicate better so both parties know when the tack is starting and have time to do their jobs.
- **Stuck in irons during tack** Increase the rate of turn going into the tack. Bear away to build speed post tack earlier. Ease the mainsheet before the tack. Increase the size of your boat speed data so it can be clearly seen during the tack.
- **Struggling to get the jib in** Slow down your rate of turn when exiting the tack. Try a second luff up post tack. Try swapping positions so the stronger crewmember is managing the sheets.

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4 wheel drive, go anywhere blue water yacht from Dykstra's hand, made flesh by K&M in 2014. Set up for high and low latitude, loves the Tropics, variable draft, of tin with a fab interior. Also comes with a pilothouse, new standing rigging this year and she even has a humidor. Perfect.

KER 65'

€875,000
Valencia

Massively easy on the eye, from Salona Yachts and Jason Ker in 2014, she also delivers sublime sailing and she is a doddle to sail short-handed. Her interior is light, airy and timeless and provides 4 cabins plus room for crew as you like.

PEGASUS 50' GLOBE

€1,312,000 + VAT
Venice

Scheduled for splash this year with electric drive, carbon build plus rig, intelligent deck layout and epic deck saloon. Also sails like a rocket. 21st century yacht building from the Pegasus team.

NAJAD 505

€540,000
Palma de Mallorca

Judel Vrolijk Najad from 2008 with a spectacular Dick Young interior which is light, bright and sparkling. Very full blue water spec, carbon rig and in-boom, she is perfect for short-handed blue water.

SWAN 44'

£175,000
Lymington

S&S Swan she is captivatingly pretty and very special. She first splashed in 1972 and is now being offered apres a nautical makeover of mammoth proportions – rig, decks, engine, sails systems – the list is long and result magical.

SWAN 36'

£108,000
Lymington

Pocket Nautors' Swan from 1989, in sparkling condition, a collaboration between Frers and Winch, these yachts are very special. Perfectly formed, she looks good from every angle, sails beautifully and of course, she's a Swan.

DISCOVERY 58'

£1,200,000
Palma de Mallorca

2016 hatch for these owners, with a massive widget list to fit her for a planet circuit. Epic interior breathed on by a talented interior designer in oak with lovely grey leather panelling. Set up for 2 handed, professionally maintained from Day One, she has yet to cross an ocean. These owners won't take her but you could.

84' CUSTOM FRERS SLOOP

US $800,000 + VAT
Venice

Special yacht designed by the Master and made flesh by probably the finest Shipyard on the planet – Huisman – in 1992. With a timeless Beelsnijder interior, she offers comfort, pace and superb sea keeping. Perfect for elegant planet circuits, and absolutely always the prettiest yacht in any anchorage.

DISCOVERY 55'

€675,000
Caribbean

#41 of this benchmark blue water cruising sisterhood from Ron Holland, we know her well. Sparingly used, massively updated 2019 including copper coat, new prop, sails and much more she is now gleaming and ready to mile munch at will. Brand new to brokerage captivity.

OCEAN 71'

£585,000
Portugal

Van de Stadt and great British yacht building from SOS in 1972, this powerful split rigged mile muncher is long legged and manageable with modest crews. Disembowelled and rebuilt in 1998 at HYS in the UK, she has been cherished since and shows little sign of the miles beneath her keel.

Agents for: Vismara Marine Concepts,
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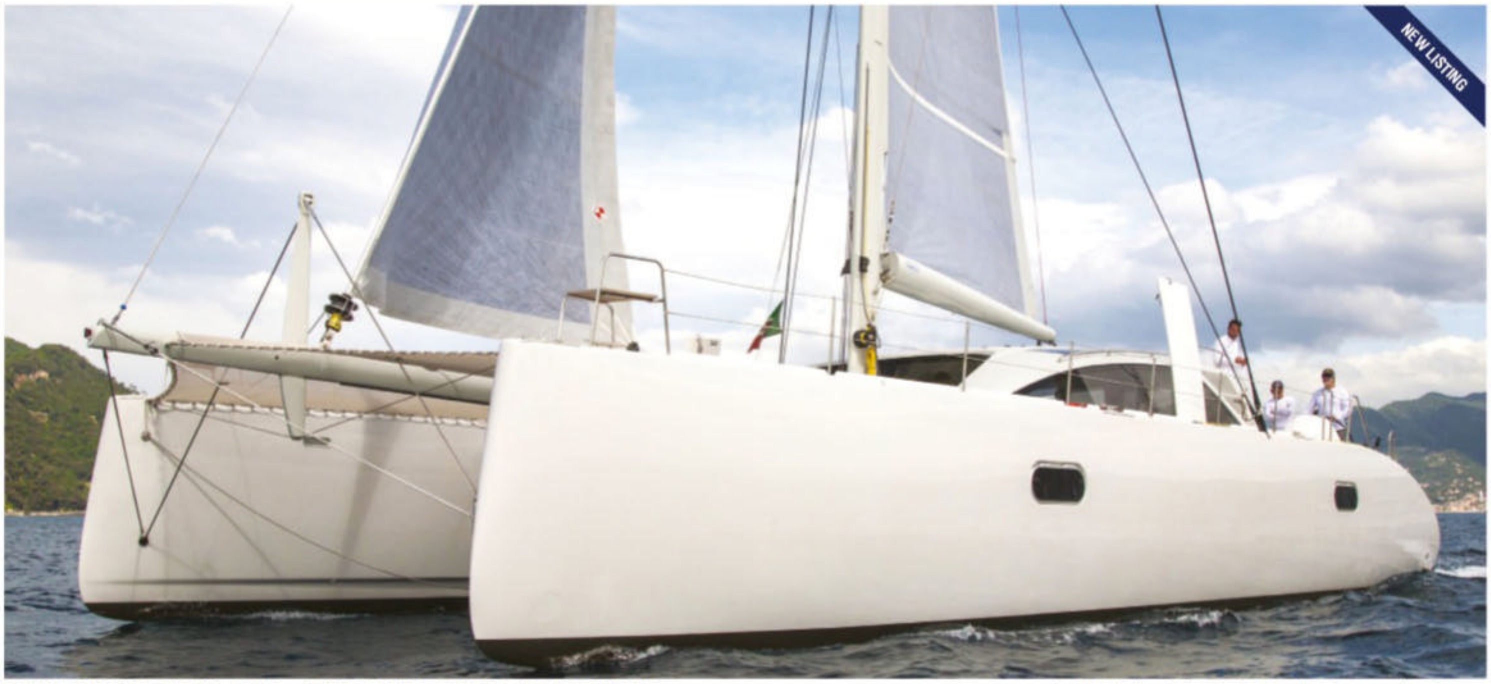

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Wally 100
Y3K

2009. Designed by German Frers as a cruiser-racer with all-round performance, **Y3K is a state-of-the-art example of a Wally Yacht**, with a powerful sail plan, flush decks, an aft Terrace-on-the-Sea, large volumes, and timeless interiors designed by Christian Liaigre accommodating up to 8 guests.

She has an impressive racing pedigree in the superyacht regattas including three Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup trophies, and comes with a full racing wardrobe and equipment to compete next summer!

Exhibited at the Palma Superyacht Show in April 2023!

78ft Reichel Pugh *Capricorno*

1995. Refit 2005. Ex MORNING GLORY **winner of the Sydney-Hobart and Cape Town-Rio races, she was entirely restyled by Nauta Design to be an exceptional cruiser-racer.** She went around the world cruising with her current owner. She won the 2021 and 2022 Mini Maxi in Sardinia and the 2022 IMA Mediterranean Maxi Inshore Challenge. With both the mast and rigging in carbon fibre, CAPRICORNO also features a set of 2022 sails North 3dl, a new bulb and a new rudder blade. She has been kept in immaculate condition.

SW-78 *Elise Whisper*

2001. Refit 2018. Built in 2001 by Southern Wind with a successful collaboration with Reichel-Pugh and Nauta Design, **she has proven her cruising qualities as well as a high level of performance, construction and seamanship.** With a capacity for 8 guests & 3 crew, she offers state of the art comfort with a large saloon, a wide master cabin aft, a double guest cabin and a twin, all ensuite, and a separated galley and crew quarters forward. Her interior and deck layouts are an invitation to cruise with family and friends, with style and high sailing sensations. Commercially endorsed, she is a successful charter yacht in the Mediterranean.

Reichel Pugh 72 *Aragon*

2006. Reichel Pugh design built in carbon Nomex by Yachting Developments, ARAGON, ex Pinta 05, is a fantastic cruiser racer with outstanding performances under Mediterranean conditions. The most advanced concepts of pre-preg carbon fibre materials were used, resulting in a hull, deck and structure that meets the high standard that all racing yachts from the drawing board of Reichel Pugh are renowned for. This ensures lightweight characteristics and complements a hull shape that contributes to a swift and agile, yet comfortable and robust ride.

Swan 60 *Albator Too*

2012. ALBATOR TOO **is the sixth Swan 60 in creation.** She was constructed using a pre-preg carbon fibre/Epoxy sandwich laminate over a Corecell foam core. Winner of the Nord Stream Race in 2016, she has been optimised for cruising without compromising her regatta winning capabilities. She has just undergone a major refit in 2020/21. She features 3 comfortable double cabins for up to 6 guests.

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212ft New Classic Schooner ATLANTIC

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Her dimensions are simply incredible; overall, she measures a remarkable 64.5 m. Her graceful sheer line and long overhangs accentuate her elegance while her waterline length of 42 m and narrow beam are a promise of unmatched speed under sail. Her spars tower some 45 m above the waterline and support a staggering area of 1,750 m^2 of sail, more than two and a half times that of the already awesome J-Class yachts.

97ft Alan Buchanan Ketch *Telstar VI*

1968. Rebuilt 2019. TELSTAR VI is a classically designed, auxiliary ketch with all the character and style of the 1960's, but the luxurious comfort, amenities and advantages of a modern yacht. Her strength and long range will provide endless enjoyment for local and world cruising. TELSTAR VI is carvel built of mahogany and oak. She underwent a substantial €13 Million refit in Malta from 2012 to 2019 where she was completely stripped out, partly replanked, beams and floor replaced with laminated beams, re fastened and sheathed with epoxy. Her all new equipment also includes carbon spars. The extensive refit enables MCA coding.

Exhibited at the Palma Superyacht Show in April 2023!

CNB 94 *Savarona*

2001. Refit 2021. A world performance lifting keel cruiser designed by naval architect Philippe Cabon & Frank Darnet (interior). Custom built in aluminium by CNB, she has been on a thorough refit schedule since new. Her first in 2006, the second in 2010, a major refit completed in 2015 (worth $ 1.5 M) and a final in 2021 in France. In August 2014, she was hauled in Palm Beach for a hull survey and inspected by Patton Marine, one of the best marine survey companies in the world, and this inspection was repeated in 2021 when she was surveyed by Bureau Veritas in France. SAVARONA has outstanding performances and seaworthy capabilities.

82ft Judel Vrolijk *Ikigai*

2002. Extensive refit & refurbishment in 2018 at Vitters Shipyard in what was effectively a complete rebuild. The spacious, modern and welcoming interior is fashioned from clear varnished teak. Large master cabin & 2 guest cabins forward. Amidships, you find a spacious saloon and dining room. Behind the companionway, to port, she boasts a brand-new high-tech navigation station, chart table and crew cabin; and to starboard, a galley and crew mess. The transom gives access to the garage with the tender. MCA coded for charter.

Vismara V71 *Red Carpet*

2017. She has been designed as a winning racing boat, equipped with cutting-edge technology to meet the expectations of passionate sailors that want to spend their sailing holiday on a high performing yacht. She is all carbon made. Her sleek water lines guarantee excellent hydrodynamic features. The wide sail area with Millennium technology ensures impressive performance, both with light breeze, and with challenging weather conditions. She can accommodate up to 6 guests. All 3 cabins have twin beds and their own private bathrooms. The teak deck has several fore and aft sunbathing areas.

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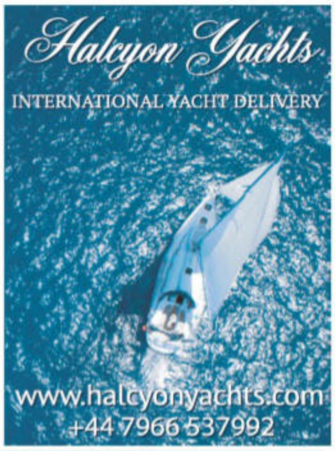

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James Tomlinson/Waszp

'It's just awesome coming off the line with 80 other boats'

HATTIE ROGERS NOMINATES THE WASZP

"I'd like to be able to say the AC40 [Women's and Youth America's Cup foiler] because hopefully – fingers crossed! – I will be in it and it's definitely the coolest boat that I've ever seen," says Rogers. "But the Waszp dinghy is what's got me into foiling and has got a lot of other younger sailors into foiling."

The Waszp is a one-design foiling dinghy designed to be more accessible to a wider range of sailors than development classes like the International Moth. It is raced in over 20 countries and has two smaller rig options for youth crews from just 40kg.

"It's just awesome coming off the line flying with 80 other boats," says Rogers."The Waszp is a really good boat for learning to foil in. It is a bit tricky sometimes for the girls in bigger wind, because it is a fairly deep sail – they're $8.2m^2$ and quite powerful. But it is a really good boat and has set me up well for other classes. There's a lot of lessons I've learned from the Waszp that, if I'd tried to learn in the Moth, I probably would have broken a lot!"

VITAL STATISTICS

James Tomlinson/Waszp

TOP SPEED	24 knots
LOA	3.35m/11ft
LAUNCHED	2016
BERTHS	0
PRICE	€15,500
ADRENALIN FACTOR	90%

Ineos Britannia

Hattie Rogers was named this year's YJA Yachtsman of the Year, the youngest ever winner of the title aged 22. Having previously competed in youth classes to a high level, she won the SailGP Waszp Inspire Grand Final in San Francisco in 2022 and is a part of the Athena Pathway Programme to develop a British Women's America's Cup team.

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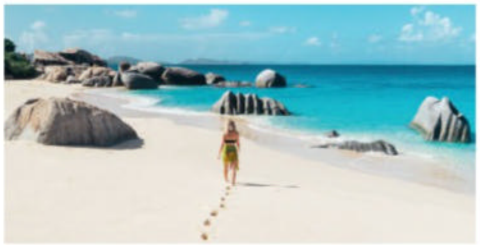

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